

# The Spectrum of Buddhism

243



Writings of Piyadassi

Foreword by Bhikkhu Bodhi

# The Spectrum of Buddhism

*Mahathera Piyadassi*

Buddhism is a vast field spanning a wide variety of concerns. Within its fold one finds a profound religious philosophy, an extensive analysis of the human mind, a lofty code of conduct, and methods of meditation for developing the full human potential for wisdom and inner peace. For twenty-five centuries Buddhism has inspired the greatest achievements of Asian thought and culture, and today the impact of its message is beginning to be felt in the Western world as well.

In the present book, Ven. Mahathera Piyadassi, one of Sri Lanka's most popular and articulate Buddhist monks, explores this wide spectrum of teachings and cultural forms that come under the name of Buddhism. Drawing upon his familiarity with both classical Buddhism and modern Western thought, he sets forth a vision of Buddhism which accentuates its vibrant vitality, its practical relevance, and its ongoing significance. This collection of essays shows us Buddhism—not as an ancient doctrine or a narrow sect—but as a living and universal path to human liberation.

Author's other books include: *The Buddha's Ancient Path*, *The Book of Protection*, *Buddhism*, *A Living Message* (BALM), and *Selections from the Dhammapada*.



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(संजीवनी शाखा केंद्र)  
क्रमांक 243







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शारदा पुस्तकालय

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# The Spectrum of Buddhism

## *Writings of Piyadassi*

*Foreword by Bhikkhu Bodhi*

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#### COVER

SAMĀDHI BUDDHA, statue at Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka,  
(3rd-4th century, A.C. —Height 6' 8" 1.980 metres).

One of the best, if not the best, Samādhī Buddha image in the world. The late Indian Premier Jawaharlal Nehru in his Autobiography writes (p. 271): "The strong calm features of the Buddha's statue soothed me and gave me strength and helped me to overcome many a period of depression" in Dehra Dun Gaol. (Also read E.B. Havell's *Handbook of Indian Art*, p. 155.)



සංයෝගා වියෝගන්තා  
*samyogā viyogantā*  
Meetings end in partings

To  
My Departed Parents  
My Esteemed Teachers  
My Elder Brother, D. Munidasa  
And to two kalyāṇa mittas (Noble Dhamma Friends)  
V. F. Gunaratna and R. Sri Pathmanathan  
May this gift of the Dhamma redound to their  
eternal happiness—Nibbana



‘සබ්බදනං ධම්මදනං ජනාති’

*Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti*

The Gift of the Dhamma (Truth) excels all other gifts

**M**AY ALL BEINGS

**UPWARD PATH BE SMOOTH, SURE AND STEADY!**





The Mahāthūpa—Ruvanvālisāya, Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka  
(1st century B.C. after the restoration)  
Larger than the stone pyramids of Ancient Egypt.

Photograph by Jivinda de Silva



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action or decision. It is not intended to be used as a basis for any  
action or decision.



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## Foreword

At the beginning of the present century, the attitude of the West towards the religions of East Asia ranged from hostile persecution to condescending tolerance—attitudes which subsisted alongside rampant political domination and economic exploitation. The West viewed itself as the harbinger of progress and the torchbearer of knowledge divinely ordained to enlighten the benighted East. The appropriate response from the peoples of the East, in its view, was therefore to be grateful acceptance and willingness to learn. Only a few courageous Western thinkers and fastidious scholars dared to investigate further into the religious systems and philosophies of the nations which their own home countries ruled, yet their lonely work paved the way for the cataclysmic changes in outlook which were to take place with the passage of time.

Now, as the nations of the East have regained their political independence, their citizens led by their intellectual vanguard have searched long and deeply into their own ancient cultural heritage for ideas and values to stabilize their sense of newly discovered national identity and to sustain them in the contemporary world. There they have discovered much that is still valid and that holds out relevance not only to themselves, but to all who are seeking clear understanding on the nature and destiny of humanity. For the insights and values proposed by these ancient systems claim to apply to human beings by virtue of their human nature as such independently of any transient and limiting cultural circumstances.

In Sri Lanka, as well as in other countries of East Asia, the search for traditional roots has resulted in a rediscovery of the vast and profound religious tradition known as Buddhism—a tradition which was interwoven with the history of the Island since the third century B.C. and which inspired its greatest intellectual and artistic achievements. In their Buddhist heritage the seekers of Sri Lanka found a body of spiritual teachings which were in astonishing accord with some of

the most advanced scientific and philosophical insights, and seekers in other Asian Buddhist countries shared the same experience. Now, as a result of this spiritual rediscovery, and in response to the increasing spiritual impoverishment of the modern materialistic West, the old relationship between the two great hemispheres has been undergoing some interesting changes. Today it is often the West which is showing itself to be the party in need of illumination, and some of its brighter denizens have been prepared to sit at the feet of teachers from the East in order to imbibe the spiritual insights of Buddhism and other Asian religious traditions.

The Venerable Mahathera Piyadassi is a monk of Sri Lanka and one of his country's best known representatives of Theravada Buddhism, the Buddhist school which is based on the most ancient Buddhist Canon, preserved in the Pali language. An heir to this 2500 year-old tradition, Ven. Piyadassi combines a thorough grounding in the Pali texts and commentaries with an open receptivity to contemporary developments in thought coming from the West, which he sees as confirming in many respects the original teachings of the Buddha. A popular preacher in Sri Lanka and a seasoned traveller in the West, with about twelve global lecture tours to his credit, Ven. Piyadassi presents a picture of Buddhism which is simultaneously faithful to its scriptural sources and extraordinarily modern. The Buddhism he portrays offers a profound philosophy of existence based on the Four Noble Truths; a detailed analysis of the human mind which anticipates some of the discoveries of modern psychology; a lofty ethics free from theistic presuppositions, characterized by boundless love and compassion; an approach to knowledge marked by the experimental method, individual investigation, and freedom from dogmatism; and methods of mind training leading to the highest liberation.

In his earlier book *The Buddha's Ancient Path*, Ven. Piyadassi gave us a comprehensive introduction to the Buddha's doctrine centred on the Noble Eightfold Path. The present work collects together a number of the Ven. Author's shorter tracts. This compilation will give the reader some lucidly presented insights into the spirit of the Buddha's teachings and their perennial value in this age of perplexity and spiritual search.



## A Word to the Reader

The path is long and arduous. No one has said it was easy. Yet there is only one path that leads to deliverance — to the end of unsatisfactoriness or suffering. Those of us intent on achieving this end must ultimately tread this difficult way alone. We must be willing to fall often by the wayside, but have enough courage and determination to pick ourselves up each time and proceed undaunted on our way. To do so, we need the guidance of the Dhamma and those who practise it. This need is the reason for this present work.

The Venerable Mahathera Piyadassi, who has been our guiding light for many years, has given some of his precious time to gather into a single volume, *The Spectrum of Buddhism*, the beacons of light he has spread around the world on his numerous global missions over the years. The clarity of his thought and the depth of his knowledge, sharpened by wide reading and scholarly analysis, is evident in his lucid expositions of the Dhamma. We know but few whose delivery in English is as inspiring and instructive. We are ever grateful to Venerable Piyadassi for having acceded to our request. May the merit of this action help him on his way.

We hope, dear reader, that the pearls of wisdom set forth so lucidly in this volume will set the stage to set you free. May this reading inspire you to shed the fetters of greed, hate, and delusion and to propagate loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity. May it help you to identify and treat with measured restraint the imposters called gain, loss, repute, disrepute, praise, blame, pleasure and pain. May it be your guide on the Noble Eightfold Path.

May we all attain Nibbāna!

**Jivinda and Priyani de Silva**

80, Ocean Terrace  
Staten Island, N.Y. 10314  
U.S.A.

## NOT SO

Thus said Gotama the Buddha:

"Now this I say, Nigrodha, not wishing to win pupils, not wishing to make you fall from your religious studies, not wishing to make you give up your mode of living, not to establish you in things accepted by you and your teacher as evil and unwholesome, nor to make you give up things regarded by you and your teacher as good and wholesome. NOT SO.

"But, Nigrodha, there are evil and unwholesome things not put away, things that have to do with defilements, conducive to rebecoming, harassing, productive of painful results, conducive to birth, ageing, and death in the future. It is for the rejection of these things that I teach the Dhamma. If one lives according to Dhamma, things concerned with defilements shall be put away, and wholesome things that make for purity shall be brought to increase and one may attain, here and now, the realization of full and abounding insight."

*Udumbarika-Sihanāda Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya, Sutta 25*



## Introduction

This volume consists of a series of essays written on various facets of Buddhism. Some of these essays were written for the Wheel and Bodhi Leaves series of booklets published by the Buddhist Publication Society (BPS) in Kandy, Sri Lanka. However, all material previously published has been extensively revised, and expanded with new Dhamma passages and their explanations. The essays concerned with Buddhism in the modern world, reflecting contemporary interest in Buddhism, have been updated.

The reader will find in this book a comprehensive survey of the principal and essential teachings of Sakyamuni Gotama, the Buddha. Hence I have entitled it: *The Spectrum of Buddhism*. The reader will also understand why the teachings of the Buddha have retained their value as a practical guide to life even in the present day.

Buddhism is not confined to any particular race, nation or country. It is universal. The Western world is fast recognising in Buddhism a sane and rational way of life, for Buddhism is the most reasonable and practical doctrine, free from any form of fanaticism. The Buddha's message is for all time, and we today realize that Buddhism provides the answer to the searchings of the modern mind.

Yet Buddhism is not for mere appreciation, nor can it be possessed as if it were some property, such as a national treasure. Buddhism is a doctrine to be lived, to be experienced. The Buddha clearly pointed to the *Dhamma*, his Teaching, as the means for crossing over the ocean of suffering, *saṃsāra*, repeated existence, and for reaching the safe and secure shore of the Sorrowless, the Deathless. So the Dhamma truly is like the raft one leaves behind when the river is crossed. (See p.225.)

The Buddha called his teaching *Dhamma-Vinaya*, the Doctrine and the Discipline. It is also known as *Buddha-sāsana*, the Dispensation of the Buddha. Buddhist discipline is concerned with conduct, the ethical side of the teaching. The discipline itself comes under the

aggregate of virtue (*sīla*), while the Doctrine belongs to the aggregates of concentration (*samādhi*) and of wisdom or penetrative insight (*paññā* or *vipassanā*). Together they are Buddhism in practice. This is the Middle Path pointed out by the Buddha which avoids the two extremes, sensual indulgence and self-torture, and which leads to supreme security from bondage, to complete deliverance (*vimutti*), to Nibbāna, which is the goal of Buddhism.

One need not study the entire Buddhist Canon (the *ti-piṭaka*) to gain enlightenment or Nibbāna. It is practice, not extensive learning, that is essential. Hear these words of the Buddha: "Though a person recites much the text, the scripture, but being heedless, acts not accordingly, such a person, like the cowherd who counts the cattle of others, shares not the fruition of the holy life" (*Dhammpada*, 19).

There is neither compulsion nor coercion in Buddhism. The Buddha was not a potentate nor was he a law-giver. He did not promise rewards to his followers for good deeds and punishment for ill deeds, for in Buddhism the law of self-responsibility rules: each person suffers for his own wrong doings, and enjoys the benefits of his own right doings. *Kamma* (*karma*), moral causation, is a law in itself with no need for a law-giver. The operations of *kamma* are characterized by perfect justice since *kamma* is a strict accountant. Therefore, each person gets his or her exact deserts — what one deserves.

Those who have not made a thorough study of the Buddha's discourses (the *suttas*), but instead have read books about Buddhism written by writers who are not conversant with the clear-worded exposition of the Buddha, rush to erroneous conclusions and call Buddhism an "otherworldly" or "life-denying" religion. For example, in *The Religion of India, The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*, pages 206, 213, Max Weber describes Buddhist salvation as "an absolutely personal performance of the single individual," and Buddhism as "mystical and a-social." This view is totally without foundation.

The Buddha did not confine himself to a cell. He was the greatest walker in the world, covering mile after mile on foot in order to bring his message of peace to all. While kings and princes came to him for guidance and instruction, the Master himself went to the poor and



needy, the lowly and the lost, to help them. He moved more with the commoner than with the aristocrat.

Once he refused to preach to a poor hungry herdsman until the man first had something to still his hunger. The Buddha knew well the people from the lowest walks of life to the highest. Well aware of the political, social, and economic conditions of India during his time, he stressed the importance of the immediate time, the present life. The reader will find in this book the true teachings of the Buddha, the answers to the misconceptions.

The historian H. G. Wells writes: "Buddhism has done more for the advance of world civilization and true culture than any other influence in the chronicles of mankind."

Dr. Richard A. Gard says: "Buddhist Civilization held up before all who came within its influence, a model of what a worthy human being should be, an ideal of character, equally worthy of emulation by king or beggar ... The production of wealth for social use instead of individual profit, the measuring of an individual in terms of his moral stature and true wisdom and not of his economic power, and of the nation's greatness in terms of the peace and prosperity of its inhabitants and not solely in terms of its balance of trade — these were some of the values embodied in the Buddhist ideal of character."

Even in the dissemination of the Buddha's teaching no coercive methods or force of any kind were ever used. The teaching, the Dhamma, spread quietly, unhurriedly, gently, with dignity, and by honourable means. In this way Buddhism penetrated to other lands without disturbing the creeds that were already in existence there.

Aldous Huxley noted: "Alone of all the great world religions Buddhism made its way without persecution, censorship or inquisition."

It is now my pleasant task to express my sense of gratitude to those who helped me in the production of this book:

Mr. and Mrs. Jivinda de Silva, Sinhala Buddhists of Sri Lanka now residing in New York City, urged and encouraged me to collect my writings in one volume. I was not very keen to take on this task because of my multifarious duties, both religious and social. Then the American Buddhist nun Ayyā Nyānasirī, (formerly Helen

Wilder), a great supporter of and an editorial reader for the Buddhist Publication Society in Kandy, quite willingly collected some of my essays on Buddhism and put them into shape, so I had only to edit them. I owe a great obligation to her for her most generous and invaluable assistance in the preparation of this book, for reading the proofs of the entire volume, and for helping in the indexing. She showed a spirit of selfless sacrifice and devotion, and a keenness of enthusiasm which did not lose its edge at any stage.

I also wish to express my particular gratefulness to the Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi, President and Editor of the BPS, for writing the Foreword, and for the unfailing help he gave me, and to the Ven. Mahāthera Kheminda of the Vajirarama for very willingly helping me in locating the many references for this volume. To the Ven. Mahāthera Siridhamma of the Vajirarama, and to Mr. Albert Witanachchi, former General Secretary of the BPS, for reading the proofs and making valuable suggestions, I am deeply indebted.

I am very grateful to Miss Enid Alahakoon of the BPS and Mr. R.M.T.B. Ratnayake for their assistance given me by typing some of the essays. I extend my special thanks to Mr. M.W. Karunaratne, the printer, and to his staff for doing a splendid job. I also wish to acknowledge with grateful thanks the authors and publishers from whose works I have quoted. Last, but far from least, to those who generously contributed towards costs, I am very grateful.

ඉච්ඡිතං පත්තිතං තුය්හං  
ඛිප්පමෙව සම්මිජ්ඣතු  
සබ්බෙ පුරෙත්තු සංකප්පා  
චන්දෝ පණ්ණරසෝ යථා

*'Icchitaṃ patthitaṃ tuyhaṃ  
Khippameva samijjhatu  
Sabbe pūrentu saṃkappā  
Cando paṇṇaraso yathā'*

ධම්මපදය කථා, ඡේවා: 391

May all your longings and aspirations  
Soon be fulfilled;  
May they all come into fruition  
Like the waxing moon.

Vajirarama  
Colombo 5  
Sri Lanka (Ceylon)

F.R. Senanayaka  
Forest Hermitage  
Kandy, Sri Lanka



නමෝ තස්ස ගගථතො අරහතො සම්මා සම්බුද්ධස්ස!

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa!*

# 1

## The Buddha

“The ages roll by and the Buddha seems not so far away after all; his voice whispers in our ears and tells us not to run away from the struggle but, calm-eyed, to face it, and to see in life ever greater opportunities for growth and advancement. Personality counts today as ever, and a person who has impressed himself on the thought of mankind as the Buddha has, so that even today there is something living and vibrant about the thought of him, must have been a wonderful man—a man who was, as Barth says, ‘the finished model of calm and sweet majesty, of infinite tenderness for all that breathes and compassion for all that suffers, of perfect moral freedom and exemption from every prejudice.’ ”<sup>1</sup> “His message old and yet very new and original for those immersed in metaphysical subtleties, captured the imagination of the intellectuals; it went deep down into the hearts of the people.”<sup>2</sup>

Buddhism had its birth at Sarnath near the city of Vārānasi (Benares), India. With only five followers at the beginning, it penetrated into many lands, and is today the religion of more than 600 million. Buddhism made such rapid strides chiefly due to its intrinsic worth and its appeal to the reasoning mind. But there were other factors that aided its progress: never did the *dharmadūtas*, the messengers of the Dhamma, the teaching, use any iniquitous methods in spreading the Dhamma. The only weapon they wielded was that of universal love and compassion.

Furthermore, Buddhism penetrated to these countries peaceably, without disturbing the creeds that were already there. Buddhist missions to which the annals of religious history scarcely afford a parallel were carried on neither by force of arms nor by the use of any coercive or reprehensible methods. Conversion by compulsion was unknown among the Buddhists, and repugnant to the Buddha and his disciples. No decrying of other creeds has ever existed in Buddhism.

Buddhism was thus able to diffuse itself through a great variety of cultures throughout the civilized world.

"There is no record known to me," wrote Dr. T.W. Rhys Davids, "in the whole of the long history of Buddhism throughout the many centuries where its followers have been for such lengthened periods supreme, of any persecution by the Buddhists of the followers of any other faith."

### The Birth

The Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, lived over 2500 years ago and is known as Siddhattha Gotama.<sup>3</sup> His father, Suddhodana, the Kshatriya<sup>4</sup> King, ruled over the land of the Sākyaans at Kapilavatthu on the Nepalese frontier. As he came from the Gotama family, he was known as Suddhodana Gotama. Mahāmāyā, princess of the Koliyas, was Suddhodana's queen.

In 623 B.C. on a full-moon day of May—Vasanta-tide, when in India the trees were laden with leaf, flower and fruit, and man, bird and beast were in joyous mood, Queen Mahāmāyā was travelling in state from Kapilavatthu to Devedaha, her parental home, according to the custom of the times, to give birth to her child. But that was not to be, for halfway between the two cities, in the beautiful Lumbini Grove, under the shade of a flowering Sal tree, she brought forth a son.

Lumbini, or Rummindei, the name by which it is now known, is one hundred miles north of Vārānasi and within sight of the snow-capped Himalayas. At this memorable spot where Prince Siddhattha, the future Buddha, was born, Emperor Asoka, 316 years after the event, erected a mighty stone pillar to mark the holy spot. The inscription engraved on the pillar in five lines consists of ninety-three Asokan characters, among which occurs the following. "*hida budhe jāte sākya muni*. Here was born the Buddha, the sage of the Sākyaans."

The mighty column is still to be seen. The pillar, as crisp as the day it was cut, had been struck by lightning even when Hiuen Tsiang, the Chinese pilgrim, saw it towards the middle of the seventh century A.C. The discovery and identification of Lumbini Park in 1896 is attributed to the renowned archaeologist, General Cunningham.



On the fifth day after the birth of the prince, the king summoned eight wise men to choose a name for the child and to speak of the royal babe's future. He was named Siddhattha, which means one whose purpose has been achieved. The Brahmins deliberated and seven of them held up two fingers each and declared: "O King, this prince will become a *Cakravartī*, a universal monarch, should he deign to rule, but should he renounce the world, he will become a *Sammā-sambuddha*, a supremely Enlightened One, and deliver humanity from ignorance." But Kondañña, the wisest and the youngest, after watching the prince, held up only one finger and said: "O King, this prince will one day go in search of Truth and become a Supremely Enlightened Buddha."

Queen Mahāmāyā, the mother, passed away on the seventh day after the birth of her child, and the babe was nursed by his mother's sister, Pajāpati Gotami. Though the child was nurtured till manhood in refinement amid an abundance of material luxury, the father did not fail to give his son the education that a prince ought to receive. He became skilled in many branches of knowledge, and in the arts of war easily excelled all others. Nevertheless, from his childhood the prince was given to serious contemplation.

### The Four Significant Visions

When the prince grew up, the father's fervent wish was that his son should marry, bring up a family, and be his worthy successor; for he often recalled to mind with dread the prediction of the sage Kondañña, and feared that the prince would one day give up home for the homeless life of an ascetic. According to the custom of the time, at the early age of sixteen the prince was married to his cousin, the beautiful Princess Yasodharā, the only daughter of King Suppabuddha and Queen Pamitā of the Koliyas. The princess was of the same age as the prince.

His father provided him with the greatest comforts. He had, so the story tells, three palaces, one for each of the Indian year's three seasons. Lacking nothing of the earthly joys of life, he lived amid song and dance, in luxury and pleasure, knowing naught of sorrow. Yet all the efforts of the father to hold his son a prisoner to the senses and make him worldly-minded were of no avail. King Suddhodana's

endeavours to keep away life's miseries from his son's inquiring eyes only heightened Prince Siddhattha's curiosity and his resolute search for truth and Enlightenment. With the advance of age and maturity, the prince began to glimpse the woes of the world.

On one occasion, when the prince went driving with his charioteer Channa to the Royal Gardens, he saw to his amazement what his eyes had never beheld before: a man weakened with age, and in the last stage of ageing, crying out in a mournful voice:

"Help master! lift me to my feet; oh, help!  
Or I shall die before I reach my house!"<sup>5</sup>

This was the first shock the prince received. The second was the sight of a man, mere skin and bones, supremely unhappy and forlorn, "smitten with some pest. The strength is gone from ham, and loin, and neck, and all the grace and joy of manhood fled."<sup>6</sup> On a third occasion he saw a band of lamenting kinsmen bearing on their shoulders the corpse of one beloved for cremation. These woeful signs, seen for the first time in his life, deeply moved him. From the charioteer he learned that even he, his beloved Princess Yasodharā, and his kith and kin, all, without exception, are subject to ageing, disease and death.

Soon after this the prince saw a recluse moving with measured steps and down-cast eyes, calm and serene, aloof and independent. He was struck by the serene countenance of the man. He learned from Channa that this recluse was one who had abandoned his home to live a life of purity, to seek truth and answer the riddle of life. Thoughts of renunciation flashed through the prince's mind and in deep contemplation he turned homeward. The heartthrob of an agonised and ailing humanity found a responsive echo in his own heart. The more he came in contact with the world outside his palace walls, the more convinced he became that the world was lacking in true happiness. But before reaching the palace he was met by a messenger with the news that a son had been born to Yasodharā. "A fetter is set upon me," uttered the prince and returned to the palace.

### **The Great Renunciation**

In the silence of that moonlit night (it was the full-moon day of July, Āsālha) such thoughts as these arose in him: "Youth, the prime



of life, ends in old age and man's senses fail him at a time when they are most needed. The hale and hearty lose their vigour and health when disease suddenly creeps in. Finally death comes, sudden perhaps and unexpected, and puts an end to this brief span of life. Surely there must be an escape from this unsatisfactoriness, from ageing and death."

Thus the great intoxication of youth (*yobbana-mada*), of health (*ārogya-mada*) and of life (*jīvita-mada*) left him. Having seen the vanity and the danger of the three intoxications, he was overcome by a powerful urge to seek and win the Deathless, to strive for deliverance from old age, illness, misery and death<sup>7</sup> not only for himself but for all beings (including his wife and child) that suffer. It was his deep compassion that led him to the quest ending in enlightenment, in Buddhahood. It was compassion that now moved his heart towards the Great Renunciation and opened for him the doors of the golden cage of his home life. It was compassion that made his determination unshakable even by the last parting glance at his beloved wife asleep with the babe in her arms.

Thus at the age of twenty-nine, in the flower of youthful manhood, on the day his beautiful Yasodharā had given birth to his only son, Rāhula, Prince Siddhattha Gotama, discarding and disdain-ing the enchantment of the royal life, scorning and spurning joys that most young men yearn for, tore himself away, renouncing wife and child, and a crown that held the promise of power and glory.

He cut off his long locks with his sword, doffed his royal robes, and putting on a hermit's robe retreated into forest solitude to seek a solution to those problems of life that had so deeply stirred his mind. He sought an answer to the riddle of life, seeking not a palliative, but a true way out of suffering—to perfect enlightenment and Nibbāna. His quest of the supreme security from bondage—Nibbāna (Nirvāna) had begun. This was the great renunciation, the greatest adventure known to humanity.

First he sought guidance from two famous sages, from Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, hoping that they, being masters of meditation, would teach him all they knew, leading him to the heights of concentrative thought. He practised concentration and reached the highest meditative attainments possible thereby, but was not satisfied

with anything short of Supreme Enlightenment. These teachers' range of knowledge, their ambit of mystical experience, however, was insufficient to grant him what he so earnestly sought, and he saw himself still far from his goal. Though both sages, in turn, asked him to stay and succeed them as the teacher of their following, the ascetic Gotama declined. Paying obeisance to them, he left them in search of the still unknown.

In his wanderings he finally reached Uruvela, by the river Nerañjarā at Gayā. He was attracted by its quiet and dense groves, and the clear waters of the river soothing to his senses and stimulating to his mind. Nearby was a village of simple folk where he could get his alms. Finding that this was a suitable place to continue his quest for Enlightenment, he decided to stay. Soon five other ascetics who admired his determined effort joined him. They were Kondañña, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma and Assaji.

### **Self-mortification**

There was, and still is, a belief in India among many of her ascetics that purification and final deliverance can be achieved by rigorous self-mortification, and the ascetic Gotama decided to test the truth of it. And so there at Uruvela he began a determined struggle to subdue his body in the hope that his mind, set free from the shackles of the body, might be able to soar to the heights of liberation. Most zealous was he in these practices. He lived on leaves and roots, on a steadily reduced pittance of food; he wore rags from dust heaps; he slept among corpses or on beds of thorns. The utter paucity of nourishment left him a physical wreck. Says the Master: "Rigorous have I been in my ascetic discipline. Rigorous have I been beyond all others. Like wasted, withered reeds became all my limbs ..." In such words as these, in later years, having attained to full enlightenment, did the Buddha give his disciples an awe-inspiring description of his early penances.<sup>8</sup>

Struggling thus for six long years, he came to death's very door, but he found himself no nearer to his goal. The utter futility of self-mortification became abundantly clear to him by his own experience. He realized that the path to the fruition of his ardent longing lay in the direction of a search inward into his own mind. Undiscouraged, his



still active mind searched for new paths to the aspired for goal. He felt, however, that with a body so utterly weakened as his, he could not follow that path with any chance of success. Thus he abandoned self-torture and extreme fasting and took normal food.

His emaciated body recovered its former health and his exhausted vigour soon returned. Now his five companions left him in their disappointment, for they thought that he had given up the effort and had resumed a life of abundance. Nevertheless, with firm determination and complete faith in his own purity and strength, unaided by any teacher, accompanied by none, the Bodhisatta resolved to make his final effort in complete solitude.

On the forenoon of the day before his Enlightenment while the Bodhisatta was seated in meditation under a banyan tree, Sujātā, the daughter of a rich householder, not knowing whether the ascetic was divine or human, offered milk rice to him saying: "Lord, may your aspirations be crowned with success!" This was his last meal prior to his Enlightenment.

### The Final Triumph

Crosslegged he sat under a tree, which later became known as the Bodhi Tree, the "Tree of Enlightenment" or "Tree of Wisdom" on the bank of the river Nerañjarā, at Gayā (now known as Buddhagayā), making the final effort with the inflexible resolution: "Though only my skin, sinews and bones remain, and my blood and flesh dry up and wither away, yet will I never stir from this seat until I have attained full Enlightenment (*sammā-sam-bodhi*). So indefatigable in effort, so unflagging in his devotion was he, and so resolute to realize truth and attain full enlightenment.

Applying himself to the "mindfulness on in-and-out breathing" (*ānāpāna satī*), the Bodhisatta entered upon and dwelt in the first meditative absorption (*jhāna* Skt. *dhyaṇa*). By gradual stages he entered upon and dwelt in the second, third and the fourth *jhānas*. Thus cleansing his mind of impurities, with the mind thus composed, he directed it to the knowledge of recollecting past births (*pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*). This was the first knowledge attained by him in the first watch of the night. Then the Bodhisatta directed his mind to the

knowledge of the disappearing and reappearing of beings of varied forms, in good states of experience, and in states of woe, each faring according to his deeds (*cutūpapātañāṇa*). This was the second knowledge attained by him in the middle watch of the night. Next he directed his mind to the knowledge of eradication of the taints (*āsavakkhayañāṇa*).<sup>9</sup>

He understood as it really is:

“This is suffering (*dukkha*), this is the arising of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering. He understood as it really is: “These are defilements (*āsavas*), this is the arising of defilements, this is the cessation of defilements, this is the path leading to the cessation of defilements.”

Knowing thus, seeing thus, his mind was liberated from the defilements: of sense pleasures (*kāmāsava*), of becoming (*bhavāsava*), and of ignorance (*avijjāsava*).<sup>10</sup> When his mind was thus liberated, there came the knowledge: “liberated” and he understood:

“Destroyed is birth, the noble life (*brahmacariya*) has been lived, done is what was to be done, there is no more of this to come” (meaning, there is no more continuity of the mind and body, that there is no more becoming, rebirth). This was the third knowledge attained by him in the last watch of the night. This is known as *tevijjā* (Skt. *trividyā*), three-fold knowledge.<sup>11</sup>

Thereupon he spoke these words of victory:

“Seeking but not finding the House Builder,  
I hurried through the round of many births:  
Painful is birth ever and again.  
O House Builder, you have been seen;  
You shall not build the house again.  
Your rafters have been broken up,  
Your ridgepole is demolished too.  
My mind has now attained the unformed Nibbāna  
And reached the end of every sort of craving.”<sup>12</sup>

Thus the Bodhisatta<sup>13</sup> Gotama at the age of thirty-five, on another full moon of May (*vesākha—vesak*) in 578 B.C. attained Supreme Enlightenment by comprehending in all their fullness, the



Four Noble Truths, the Eternal Verities, and had become the Buddha, the Great Healer and Consummate Master-Physician who can cure the ills of beings. This is the greatest unshakable victory.

The Four Noble Truths is the priceless message that Buddha gave to suffering humanity for their guidance, to help them to be rid of the bondage of *dukkha*, and to attain the Absolute Happiness, that Absolute Reality—*Nibbāna*.

These Truths are not his creation. He only re-discovered their existence. We thus have in the Buddha one who deserves our respect and reverence not only as a teacher but also as a model of the noble, self-sacrificing and meditative life we would do well to follow if we wish to improve ourselves.

One of the noteworthy characteristics that distinguish the Buddha from all other religious teachers is that he was a human being having no connection whatsoever with a God or any other "Supernatural" Being. He was neither God nor an incarnation of God, nor a prophet, nor any mythological figure. He was a man, but an extraordinary man (*acchhariya manussa*), a unique being, a man par excellence (*purisuttama*). All his achievements are attributed to his human effort and his human understanding. Through personal experience he understood the supremacy of man.

Depending on his own unremitting energy, unaided by any teacher, human or divine, he achieved the highest mental and intellectual attainments, reached the acme of purity, and was perfect in the best qualities of human nature. He was an embodiment of compassion and wisdom, which became the two guiding principles in his Dispensation (*sāsana*).

The Buddha never claimed to be a saviour who tried to save "souls" by means of a revealed religion. Through his own perseverance and understanding he proved that infinite potentialities are latent in man and that it must be man's endeavour to develop and unfold these possibilities. He proved by his own experience that deliverance and enlightenment lie fully within man's range of effort.

"Religion of the highest and fullest character can coexist with a complete absence of belief in revelation in any straightforward sense

of the word, and in that kernel of revealed religion, a personal God. Under the term personal god I include all ideas of a so-called superpersonal god, of the same spiritual and mental nature as a personality but on a higher level, or indeed any supernatural spiritual existence of force." (Julian Huxley, *Religion Without Revelation*, pp. 2 and 7.)

Each individual should make the appropriate effort and break the shackles that have kept him in bondage, winning freedom from the bonds of existence by perseverance, self-exertion and insight. It was the Buddha who for the first time in the world's history taught that deliverance could be attained independently of an external agency, that deliverance from suffering must be wrought and fashioned by each one for himself upon the anvil of his own actions.

None can grant deliverance to another who merely begs for it. Others may lend us a helping hand by guidance and instruction and in other ways, but the highest freedom is attained only through self-realization and self-awakening to truth and not through prayers and petitions to a Supreme Being, human or divine. The Buddha warns his disciples against shifting the burden to an external agency, directs them to the ways of discrimination and research, and urges them to get busy with the real task of developing their inner forces and qualities.

### Misconceptions

There are some who take delight in making the Buddha a non-human. They quote a passage from the *Anguttara Nikāya* (11, 37), mistranslate it and misunderstand it. The story goes thus:

Once the Buddha was seated under a tree in the meditation posture, senses calmed, his mind quiet and attained to supreme control and serenity. Then a Brahmin, Dona by name, approached the Buddha and asked:

"Sir, will you be a god, a *deva*?"

"No, brahmin."

"Sir, will you be a heavenly angel, a *gandhabba*?"

"No, brahmin."

"Sir, will you be a demon, a *yakkha*?"

"No, brahmin."



“Sir, will you be a human being, a *manussa*?”

“No, brahmin.”

“Then, sir, what indeed will you be?”

Now understand the Buddha’s reply carefully:

“Brahmin, whatever defilements (*āsavas*) there be owing to the presence of which a person may be identified as a god or a heavenly angel or a demon or a human being, all these defilements in me are abandoned, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump, done away with, and are no more subject to future arising.

“Just as, brahmin, a blue or red or white lotus in water, grows in water and stands up above the water untouched by it, so too I, who was born in the world and grew in the world, have transcended the world, and I live untouched by the world. Remember me as one who is enlightened (*Buddhoti maṃ dhārehi brāhmaṇa*).”

What the Buddha said was that he was not a god or a heavenly angel or a demon or a human being full of defilements. From the above it is clear that the Buddha wanted the brahmin to know that he was not a human being with defilements. He did not want the brahmin to put him into any of those categories. The Buddha was in the world but not of the world. This is clear from the simile of the lotus. Hasty critics, however, rush to a wrong conclusion and want others to believe that the Buddha was not a human being.

In the same text, Anguttara Nikāya (1, 22), there is a clear instance in which the Buddha categorically declared that he was a human being:

“Monks, there is one person (*puggala*) whose birth into this world is for the welfare, and happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the gain and welfare and happiness of gods (*devās*) and humanity. Who is this one person (*eka puggala*)? It is the Tathāgata, who is a Consummate One (*arahat*), a Supremely Enlightened One (*sammā-sambuddho*) ... Monks, one person born into the world is an extraordinary man, a marvellous man (*acchariya manussa*).”

Note the Pali word *manussa*, a human being. Yes, the Buddha was a human being but not just another man, but a marvellous man.

The Buddhist texts say that the Bodhisatta (as he is known before he became the Buddha) was in the Tusita heaven (*devaloka*) but came down to the human world to be born as a human being (*manussatta*). His parents, King Suddhodana and Queen Mahāmāyā, were human beings.

The Bodhisatta<sup>13</sup> was born as a man, attained enlightenment (Buddhahood) as a man and finally passed away into *parinibbāna* as a man. Even after his Supreme Enlightenment he did not call himself a God or Brahma or any "Supernatural Being," but an extraordinary man.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, a Hindu steeped in the tenets of the Vedas and Vedānta, says that Buddhism is an off-shoot of Hinduism, and even goes to the extent of calling the Buddha a Hindu. He writes:

"The Buddha did not feel that he was announcing a new religion. He was born, grew up, and died a Hindu. He was restating with a new emphasis the ancient ideals of the Indo-Aryan civilization ..."<sup>14</sup>

But the Buddha himself declares that his teaching was a revelation of truths discovered by himself, not known to his contemporaries, not inherited from past tradition. Thus, in his very first sermon, referring to the Four Noble Truths, he says: "Monks, with the thought 'This is the noble truth of suffering, this is its cause, this is its cessation, this is the way leading to its cessation,' there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, insight and light concerning things unheard of before (*pubbesu ananussutesu, dhammesu*)."<sup>15</sup> (See below p. 27.)

Again, while making clear to his disciples the difference between a fully Enlightened One and the Arahats, the consummate Ones, the Buddha says: "The Tathāgata, O disciples, while being an Arahāt is fully enlightened. It is he who proclaims a way not proclaimed before, he is the knower of a way, who understands a way who is skilled in a way (*maggaññu, maggavidu, maggakovido*). And now, his disciples are way-farers who follow in his footsteps."<sup>16</sup>

The ancient way the Buddha refers to is the Noble Eightfold Way and not any ideals of the Indo-Āryan civilization as Dr. Radhakrishnan imagines.



However, referring to the Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi, the architect of Indian independence says: "by his immense sacrifice, by his great renunciation and by the immaculate purity of his life, he left an indelible impress upon Hinduism and Hinduism owes an eternal debt of gratitude to that great teacher." (Mahādev Desai, *With Gandhiji in Ceylon*, Madras, 1928, p. 26.)

## Dependent Arising

For a week, immediately after the Enlightenment, the Buddha sat at the foot of the Bodhi Tree, experiencing the supreme bliss of Emanicipation. At the end of the seven days he emerged from that concentration (*samādhi*) and in the first watch of that night thought over the dependent arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) as to how things arise (*anuloma*) thus:

"When this is, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises; namely: dependent on ignorance, volitional or kamma formations; dependent on volitional formations, (rebirth or rebecoming) consciousness; dependent on consciousness, mentality-materiality (mental and physical combination); dependent on mentality-materiality, the six-fold base (the five physical sense organs with consciousness as the sixth); dependent on the six-fold base, contact; dependent on contact, feeling; dependent on feeling, craving; dependent on craving, clinging; dependent on clinging, the process of becoming; dependent on the process of becoming, there comes to be birth; dependent on birth arise ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Thus does this whole mass of *dukkha* or suffering arise."

In the second watch of the night, the Buddha thought over the dependent arising as to how things cease (*paṭiloma*) thus: "When this is not, that does not come to be, with the cessation of this, that ceases; namely: with the utter cessation of ignorance, the cessation of volitional formations: with the cessation of formations, the cessation of consciousness ... (and so on). Thus does this whole mass of suffering cease."

In the third watch of the night, the Buddha thought over the dependent arising both as to how things arise and cease thus:

"When this is, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises; when this is not, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases; namely: dependent on ignorance, volitional formations ... (and so on). Thus does this whole mass of suffering arise. With the utter cessation of ignorance, the cessation of volitional formations ... (and so on). Thus does this whole mass of suffering cease."<sup>17</sup>

The Buddha now spent six more weeks in lonely retreat at six different spots in the vicinity of the Bodhi Tree. At the end of this period two merchants, Tapassu and Bhallika, who were passing that way, offered rice cake and honey to the Master, and said: "We go for refuge to the Buddha and to the Dhamma."<sup>18</sup> Let the Blessed One receive us as his followers."<sup>19</sup> They became his first lay followers (*upāsakas*).

### **The First Sermon**

Now while the Blessed One dwelt in solitude this thought occurred to him:

"The Dhamma I have realized is deep, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, beyond mere reasoning, subtle, and intelligible to the wise. But this generation delights, revels and rejoices in sensual pleasures. It is hard for such a generation to see this conditionality, this dependent arising. Hard too, is it to see this calming of all conditioned things, the giving up of all substance of becoming, the extinction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna. And if I were to teach the Dhamma and others were not to understand me, that would be a weariness, a vexation for me."<sup>20</sup>

Pondering thus he was first reluctant to teach the Dhamma, but on surveying the world with his mental eye, he saw beings with little dust in their eyes, and with much dust in their eyes, with keen faculties and dull faculties, with good qualities and bad qualities, easy to teach and hard to teach, some who are alive to the perils hereafter of present wrong-doings, and some who are not. The Master then declared his readiness to proclaim the Dhamma in this solemn utterance:



*“Apārutā tesam amatassa dvārā  
Ye sotavanto pamuñcantu saddham.”*

“Open are the doors of the Deathless.  
Let them that have ears repose trust.”<sup>21</sup>

When considering to whom he should teach the Dhamma first, he thought of Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, his teachers of old; for he knew that they were wise and discerning. But that was not to be; they had passed away. Then the Blessed One made up his mind to make known the truth to those five ascetics, his former friends, still steeped in the fruitless rigours of extreme asceticism. Knowing that they were living at Benares in the Deer Park at Isipatana, the Resort of Seers (modern Sarnath), the Blessed One left Gayā for distant Benares, walking by stages some 150 miles. On the way not far from Gayā the Buddha was met by Upaka, an ascetic who, struck by the serene appearance of the Master, inquired: “Who is your teacher? Whose teaching do you profess?”

The Buddha replied: “I have no teacher, one like me does not exist in all the world, for I am the Peerless Teacher, the Arahāt, I alone am Supremely Enlightened. Quenching all defilements Nibbāna’s calm have I attained. I go to the city of Kāsi (Benares) to set in motion the Wheel of Dhamma. In a world where blindness reigns, I shall beat the Deathless Drum.”

“Friend, you then claim you are a universal victor,” said Upaka. The Buddha replied: “Those who have attained the cessation of defilements, they are, indeed, victors like me. All evil have I vanquished. Hence I am a victor.”

Upaka shook his head, remarking sarcastically, “It may be so, friend,” and took a bypath. The Buddha continued his journey, and in gradual stages reached the Deer Park at Isipatana. The five ascetics, seeing the Buddha from afar, discussed among themselves: “Friends, here comes the ascetic Gotama who gave up the struggle and turned to a life of abundance and luxury. Let us make no kind of salutation to him.” But when the Buddha approached them, they were struck by his dignified presence and they failed in their resolve. One went to meet him and took his almsbowl and robe; another prepared a seat,

still another brought him water. The Buddha sat on the seat prepared for him, and the five ascetics then addressed him by name and greeted him as an equal, saying, "*āvuso*" (friend).

The Buddha said, "Address not the Tathāgata (Perfect One) by the word "*āvuso*." The Tathāgata, monks, is a Consummate One (Arahat), a Supremely Enlightened One is he. Give ear, monks, the Deathless has been attained. I shall instruct you, I shall teach you the Dhamma; following my teaching you will know and realize for yourselves even in this lifetime that supreme goal of purity for the sake of which clansmen retire from home to follow the homeless life." Thereupon the five monks said: "Friend Gotama, even with the stern austerities, penances and self-torture you practised, you failed to attain the superhuman vision and insight. Now that you are living a life of luxury, self-indulgence, and have given up the struggle, how could you have reached superhuman vision and insight?"

Then replied the Buddha: "The Tathāgata has not ceased from effort and reverted to a life of luxury and abundance. The Tathāgata is a supremely Enlightened One. Give ear, monks, the Deathless has been attained. I shall instruct you. I shall teach you the Dhamma."

A second time the monks said the same thing to the Buddha who gave the same answer a second time. A third time did they repeat the same question. In spite of the assurance given by the Master, they did not change their attitude. Then the Buddha spoke to them thus: "Confess, O monks, did ever I speak to you in this way before?" Touched by this appeal of the Blessed One, the five ascetics submitted and acknowledged and said: "No, indeed, Lord." Thus did the Supreme Sage, the Tamed One, tame the hearts of the five ascetics with patience and kindness, with wisdom and skill. Overcome and convinced by his utterances, the monks indicated their readiness to listen to him.

### **The Middle Path**

Now on a full moon day of July, 589 years before Christ, in the evening, at the moment the sun was setting and the full moon simultaneously rising, in the shady Deer Park at Isipatana the Buddha addressed them:



"Monks, these two extremes ought not to be cultivated by the recluse. What two? Sensual indulgence which is low, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, and conducive to harm; and self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, and conducive to harm. The Middle Path, monks, understood by the Tathāgata, avoiding the extremes, gives vision and knowledge and leads to calm, realisation, enlightenment and Nibbāna. And what, monks, is that Middle Path? It is this Noble Eightfold Path, namely: right understanding, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration."

Then the Buddha explained to them the Four Noble Truths: the noble truth of suffering, the noble truth of the arising of suffering, the noble truth of the cessation of suffering, and the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering.<sup>22</sup>

Thus did the Supreme Buddha proclaim the truth and set in motion the Wheel of the Dhamma (*dhamma-cakka-pavattana*). This first discourse, this message of the Deer Park, is the core of the Buddha's Teaching. As the footprint of every creature that walks the earth could be included in the elephant's footprint which is pre-eminent for size, so does the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths embrace the entire teaching of the Buddha.

Explaining each of the Four Noble Truths, the Master said, "Such, monks, was the vision, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, the light that arose in me, that I gained about things not heard before. As long as, monks, my intuitive knowledge, my vision in regard to these Four Noble Truths was not absolutely clear to me, I did not claim that I had gained the incomparable Supreme Enlightenment. But when, monks, my intuitive knowledge, my vision, in regard to these Four Noble Truths was absolutely clear to me, then only did I claim that I had gained the incomparable Supreme Enlightenment. And there arose in me insight and vision: unshakable is the deliverance of my mind (*akuppā me ceto vimutti*), this is my last birth, there is no more becoming (rebirth)."<sup>23</sup> Thus spoke the Buddha, and the five monks, glad at heart, applauded the words of the Blessed One.

On December 2, 1930, at the royal dinner at the King's Palace, Sweden, when it was his turn to speak, Sir C.V. Raman, the Nobel

Prize winner physicist, left aside science and, to the surprise of the renowned guests, delivered a most powerful address on the Buddha and India's past glories. "In the vicinity of Benares," said Sir Venkata Raman, "there exists a path which is for me the most sacred place in India. This path was one day travelled over by the Prince Siddhartha, after he had gotten rid of all his worldly possessions in order to go through the world and proclaim the annunciation of love." (*The Bosat*, Vol. 5 No. I, 1942, Vajirarama, Colombo, p.8.)

### The Sinsapa Grove

The supremacy of the Four Noble Truths in the teaching of the Buddha is abundantly clear from the message of the Sinsapa Grove as from the message of the Deer Park:

Once the Blessed One was living at Kosambi (near Allahabad) in the Sinsapa Grove. Then, gathering a few sinsapa leaves in his hand, the Blessed One addressed the monks:

"What do you think, monks, which is greater in quantity, the handful of sinsapa leaves gathered by me or what is in the forest overhead?"

"Not many, trifling, venerable sir, are the leaves in the handful gathered by the Blessed One; many are the leaves in the forest overhead."

"Even so, monks, many are those things I have fully realized, but not declared unto you; few are the things I have declared unto you. And why, monks, have I not declared them? They, monks, are not useful, are not essential to the life of purity, they do not lead to disgust, to dispassion, to cessation, to tranquillity, to full understanding, to full Enlightenment, to Nibbāna. That is why, monks, they are not declared by me.

"And what is it, monks, that I have declared?

This is suffering (*dukkha*)—this have I declared.

This is the arising of suffering—this have I declared.

This is the cessation of suffering—this have I declared.

This is the path leading to the cessation of suffering—this have I declared.

And why, monks, have I declared these truths?



"They are, indeed, useful, are essential to the life of purity, they lead to disgust, to dispassion, to cessation, to tranquillity, to full understanding, to Enlightenment, to Nibbāna. That is why, monks, they are declared by me. Therefore, monks, an effort should be made to realize: This is suffering, this is the arising of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering."<sup>24</sup>

The Buddha has emphatically said: "One thing do I make known: suffering, and the cessation of suffering"<sup>25</sup> (*dukkhamiceva paiñāpemi, dukkhassa ca nirodham*). To understand this unequivocal saying is to understand Buddhism; for the entire teaching of the Buddha is nothing else than the application of this one principle. What can be called the discovery of a Buddha is just these Four Noble Truths. This is the typical teaching of the Buddhas of all ages.

### The Peerless Physician

The Buddha is also known as the peerless physician (*bhisakko*), the supreme surgeon (*sallakatto anuttaro*). He indeed, is an unrivalled healer.

The Buddha's method of exposition of the Four Noble Truths is comparable to that of a physician. As a physician, he first diagnosed the illness, next he discovered the cause or the arising of the illness, then he considered its removal, and lastly applied the remedy.

Suffering (*dukkha*) is the illness; craving (*taṇhā*) is the arising or the root cause of the illness (*samudaya*); through the removal of craving, the illness is removed, and that is the cure (*nirodha-nibbāna*); the Noble Eightfold Path (*magga*) is the remedy.

The Buddha's reply to a brahmin who wished to know why the Master is called a Buddha clearly indicates that it was for no other reason than a perfect knowledge of the Four Noble Truths. Here is the Buddha's reply:

"I knew what should be known,  
What should be cultivated I have cultivated,  
What should be abandoned that have I let go.  
Hence, O brahmin, I am Buddha—the Awakened One."<sup>26</sup>

With the proclamation of the Dhamma for the first time, with the setting in motion of the Wheel of the Dhamma, and with the conversion of the five ascetics, the Deer Park at Isipatana became the birth-place of the Buddha's Dispensation (*sāsana*) and of his Community of Monks (*sangha*).<sup>27</sup>

### The Spread of the Dhamma

Thereafter the Buddha spent the *vassa*,<sup>28</sup> at the Deer Park at Isipatana, sacred this day to over six-hundred million of the human race. During these three months of "rains" fifty others headed by Yasa, a young man of wealth, joined the Order. Now the Buddha had sixty disciples, all Arahats who had realized the Dhamma and were fully competent to teach others. When the rainy season ended, the Master addressed his immediate disciples in these words:

"Released am I, monks, from all ties whether human or divine. You also are delivered from fetters whether human or divine. Go now and wander for the welfare and happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the gain, welfare and happiness of gods and men. Let not two of you proceed in the same direction. Proclaim the Dhamma that is excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle and excellent in the end, possessed of meaning and the letter and utterly perfect. Proclaim the life of purity, the holy life consummate and pure. There are beings with little dust in their eyes who will be lost through not hearing the Dhamma, there are beings who will understand the Dhamma, I also shall go to Uruvela, to Senanigama, to teach the Dhamma."<sup>29</sup>

Thus did the Buddha commence his sublime mission, which lasted to the end of his life. With his disciples he walked the highways and byways of India enfolding all within the aura of his boundless compassion and wisdom. Though the Order of Monks began its career with sixty bhikkhus, it expanded soon into thousands, and, as a result of the increasing number of monks, many monasteries came into being, and in later times monastic Indian universities like Nālandā, Vikramasilā, Jagaddalā, Vikramपुरi and Odantapuri, became cultural centres which gradually influenced the whole of Asia, and through it the mental life of humankind.



After a successful ministry of forty-five years the Buddha passed away at the age of eighty at the twin Sala Trees of the Mallas at Kusinārā (in modern Uttara Pradesh about 120 miles north-east of Benāres).<sup>30</sup>

### The Buddha's Ministry

During his long ministry of forty-five years the Buddha walked widely throughout the Northern Districts of India. But during the rains retreats, he generally stayed in one place. Here follows a brief sketch of his retreats gathered from the texts:

1st year: Vārānasi—After the first proclamation of the Dhamma on the full moon day of July, the Buddha spent the first *vassa* at Isipatana, Vārānasi.

The 2nd, 3rd and 4th years: Rājagaha—(in the Bamboo Grove, Veluvana). It was during the third year that Sudatta, a householder of Sāvattthī known for his bounty as Anāthapiṇḍika, “the feeder of the forlorn,” having heard that a Buddha had come into being, went in search of him, listened to him and having gained confidence (*saddhā*) in the Teacher, the Teaching and the Taught (the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha), attained the first stage of sainthood (*sotāpatti*). He was renowned as the chief supporter (*dāyaka*) of the Master. Anāthapiṇḍika had built the famous Jetavana monastery at Sāvattthī, known today as Sahet-mahet, and offered it to the Buddha and his disciples. The ruins of this monastery are still to be seen.

5th year: Vesālī—The Buddha kept retreat in the Pinnacled Hall (*kūtāgārasālā*). It was at this time that King Suddhodana fell ill. The Master visited him, and preached the Dhamma hearing which the king attained perfect sanctity (*arahatta*), and after enjoying the bliss of emancipation for seven days, passed away. The Order of Nuns was also founded during this time. (See below “Women In Buddhist Literature”.)

6th year: Mankula Hill—Here the Buddha performed the “Twin Wonder” (*yamaka pāṭihāriya*). He did the same for the first time at Kapilavatthu to overcome the pride of the Sakyas, his relatives.

7th year: Tāvātimsa—(the Heaven of the Thirty-three)—Here the Buddha preached the Abhidhamma or the Higher Doctrine to the deities (*devās*) headed by his mother deva, Mahāmāyā, who had passed away seven days after the birth of Prince Siddhattha, and was reborn as a deva in the Tāvātimsa.

8th year: Bhesakalā Forest—(near Sumsumāragiri)—It was here that Nakulapitā and his wife, a genial couple, came to see the Buddha, told him about their very happy married life and expressed the wish that they might continue to live together both here and hereafter. These two were placed by the Buddha as chiefs of those that win confidence.

9th year: Kosambi—at the Ghosita Monastery.

10th year: Pārileyyakka Forest—It was in the tenth year that, at Kosambi, a dispute arose between two parties of monks owing to a trivial offence committed by a monk. As they could not be reconciled, and as they did not pay heed to his exhortation, the Buddha retired to the forest. At the end of the *vassa*, their dispute settled, the monks came to Sāvattthī and begged pardon of the Buddha.

11th year: Village of Ekanāla (in the Magadha country)—It was here that the Buddha met the brahmin farmer Kasibhāradvāja who spoke to the Buddha somewhat discourteously. The Buddha, however, answered his questions with his characteristic sobriety. Bhāradvāja became an ardent follower of the Buddha. It was on this occasion that the very interesting discourse, Kasibhāradvāja Sutta (Sutta Nipāta), was delivered. (Read “The Book of Protection” by this author (BPS).)

12th year: Verañjā—The introduction of the Vinaya is attributed to the twelfth year. It was also during this retreat that the brahmin Verañja came to see the Buddha, asked a series of questions on Buddhist practices, and being satisfied with the answers, became a follower of the Blessed One, and invited him and the Sangha to spend the rainy season (*vassa*) at his village Verañjā. At that time there was a famine. The Buddha and his disciples had to be satisfied with very coarse food supplied by horse merchants. As it was the custom of the Buddha to take leave of the inviter before setting out on his journeying, he saw the brahmin at the end of the *vassa*. The latter



admitted that though he had invited the Buddha and his disciples to spend the retreat at Verañjā, he had failed in his duties towards them during the entire season owing to his being taxed with household duties. However, the next day he offered food and gifts of robes to the Buddha and the Sangha.

13th year: Cāliya Rock (near the city of Cālīka)—During this time the elder Meghiya was his personal attendant. The elder being attracted by a beautiful mango-grove near a river asked the Buddha for permission to go there for meditation. Though the Buddha asked him to wait till another monk came, he repeated the request. The Buddha granted him permission. The elder went, but to his great surprise he was oppressed by thoughts of sense-pleasures, ill will and harm, and returned disappointed. Thereon the Buddha said: “Meghiya, for the deliverance of the mind of the immature, five things are conducive to their maturing: 1. a good friend; 2. virtuous behaviour guided by the essential precepts for training; 3. good counsel tending to dispassion, calm, cessation, Enlightenment and Nibbāna; 4. the effort to abandon evil thoughts and acquiring of wisdom that discerns the rise and fall of things.”<sup>31</sup>

14th year: Jetavana monastery, Sāvattihī—During this time the Venerable Rāhula, who was still a novice (*sāmaṇera*), received higher ordination (*upasampadā*). According to Vinaya, higher ordination is not conferred before the age of twenty; Ven. Rāhula had then reached that age.

15th year: Kapilavatthu (the birthplace of Prince Siddhattha)—It was in this year that the death occurred of King Suppabuddha, the father of Yasodharā.

16th year: City of Ālavi—During this year Alavaka, the demon who devoured human flesh, was tamed by the Buddha. He became a follower of the Buddha. For Ālavaka's questions and the Master's answers read Ālavaka Sutta, in the Sutta Nipāta or “The Book of Protection” p. 81 by this author (BPS).

17th year: Rājagaha, at Veluvana Monastery—During this time a well known courtesan, Sirimā, sister of Jivaka, the physician, died. The Buddha attended the funeral, and asked the king to inform the people to buy the dead body—the body that attracted so many when

she was alive. No one cared to have it even without paying a price. On that occasion addressing the crowd the Buddha said in verse:

“Behold this painted image, a body full of wounds,  
heaped up (with bones), diseased,  
the object of thought of many, in which  
there is neither permanence nor stability.”

*Dhammapada*, 147

18th year: Cāliya Rock—During this time a young weaver’s daughter met the Buddha and listened to his discourse on mindfulness of death (*marañānussati*). On another occasion she answered correctly all the four questions put to her by the Master, because she often pondered over the words of the Buddha. Her answers were philosophical, and the congregations who had not given a thought to the Buddhaword, could not grasp the meaning of her answers. The Buddha, however, praised her and addressed them in verse thus:

“Blind is this world;  
few here clearly see.  
Like a bird that escapes from the net,  
only a few go to a good state of existence.”

*Dhammapada*, 174

She heard the Dhamma and attained the first stage of sanctity (*sotāpatti*). But unfortunately she died an untimely death. (For a detailed account of this interesting story, and the questions and answers, see the *Commentary on the Dhammapada*, Vol. III, p.170, or Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends*, Part 3, p.14. Also read below “Women in Buddhist Literature” pp. 326 ff.)

19th year: Cāliya Rock.

20th year: Rājagaha, at Veluvana Monastery.

From the 21st year till the 43rd year: Sāvattihī.

Of these twenty-four *vassas*, eighteen were spent at Jetavana Monastery. The rest at Pubbārāma. Anāthapiṇḍika and Visākhā were the chief supporters.

44th year: Beluva—(a small village, probably situated near Vesālī), where the Buddha suppressed, by force of will, a grave illness.



In the 45th year of his Enlightenment, the Buddha passed away at Kusinārā in the month of May (*vesākha*) before the commencement of the rains.

During the first twenty years of the Buddha's life, the bhikkhus Nāgasamāla, Nāgita, Upavāna, Sunakkhatta, Sāgata, Rādha and Meghiya and the novice (*sāmaṇera*) Cunda attended upon the Master, though not regularly. However, after the twentieth year, the Buddha wished to have a regular attendant. Thereon all the great eighty Arahats, like Sāriputta and Moggallāna, expressed their willingness to attend upon their Master. But this did not meet with his approval. Perhaps the Buddha thought that these arahats could be of greater service to humanity.

Then the elders requested Ānanda Thera, who had kept silent all this while, to beg of the Master to be his attendant. Ānanda Thera's answer is interesting. He said, "If the Master is willing to have me as his attendant, he will speak." Then the Buddha said: "Ānanda, let not others persuade you. You on your own may attend upon me." (Read the next chapter on Venerable Ānanda.)

### Buddhahood and Saintship

Perfect Enlightenment, the discovery and realization of the Four Noble Truths (Buddhahood), is not the prerogative of a single being chosen by Divine Providence, nor is it a unique and unrepeatable event in human history. It is an achievement open to anyone who earnestly strives for perfect purity and wisdom, and with inflexible will cultivates the *pārami*, the perfections which are the requisites of Buddhahood, and the Noble Eightfold Path. There have been Buddhas in the dim past and there will be Buddhas in the future when necessity arises and conditions are favourable. But we need not think of that distant future; now, in our present days, the "doors to the Deathless" are still wide open. Those who enter through them, reaching perfect sanctity (*Arahatta*), the final liberation from suffering (*Nibbāna*), have been solemnly declared by the Buddha to be his equals as far as the emancipation from defilements and ultimate deliverance is concerned:

"Victors like me are they, indeed,  
They who have won defilements' end."<sup>32</sup>

The Buddha, however, also made clear to his disciples the difference between a fully Enlightened One and the Arahats,<sup>33</sup> the Accomplished Saints:

“The Tathāgata, O disciples, while being an Arahāt, is fully Enlightened. It is he who proclaims a path not proclaimed before; he is the knower of a Path, who understands a Path, who is skilled in a Path. And now his disciples are wayfarers who follow in his footsteps. That, disciples, is the distinction, the specific feature which distinguishes the Tathāgata, who being an Arahāt, is fully Enlightened, from the disciple who is freed by insight.”<sup>34</sup>

### **Salient Features of the Dhamma**

There are no dark corners of ignorance, no cobwebs of mystery, no smoky chambers of secrecy; there are no “secret doctrines” no hidden dogmas in the teaching of the Buddha which is open as daylight, and as clear as crystal. “The doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Buddha shine when open and not when covered even as the sun and moon shine when open and not when covered” (A.1.283).

The Master disapproved of those who professed to have “secret doctrines,” saying, “Secrecy is the hallmark of false doctrines.” Addressing the Thera Ānanda, the Master said: “I have taught the Dhamma, Ānanda, without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine; for in respect of the truths, Ānanda, the Tathāgata has no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher who hides some essential knowledge from the pupil.”<sup>35</sup>

A Buddha is an extreme rarity, but is no freak in human history. He would not preserve his supreme knowledge for himself alone. Such an idea would be completely ridiculous and abhorrent from the Buddhist point of view, and to the Buddha such a wish is utterly inconceivable. Driven by universal love and compassion, the Buddha expounded his teaching without keeping back anything that was essential for man’s deliverance from the shackles of *saṃsāra*, repeated wandering.

The Buddha’s teaching from beginning to end is open to all those who have eyes to see, and a mind to understand. Buddhism was



never forced upon anyone at the point of the gun or the bayonet. Conversion by compulsion was unknown among Buddhists and repugnant to the Buddha.

Of the Buddha's creed of compassion, H. Fielding Hall writes in *The Soul of a People*: "There can never be a war of Buddhism. No ravished country has ever borne witness to the prowess of the followers of the Buddha; no murdered men have poured out their blood on their hearth-stones, killed in his name; no ruined women have cursed his name to high heaven. He and his faith are clean of the stain of blood. He was the preacher of the Great Peace, of love of charity, of compassion, and so clear is his teaching that it can never be misunderstood."

When communicating the Dhamma to his disciples, the Master made no distinctions whatsoever among them; for there were no specially chosen favourite disciples. Among his disciples, all those who were Arahats, who were passion-free and had shed the fetters binding to renewed existence, had equally perfected themselves in purity. But there were some outstanding ones who were skilled in different branches of knowledge and practice, and because of their mental endowments, they gained positions of distinction; but special favours were never granted to anyone by the Master. Upāli, for instance, who came from a barber's family, was made the chief in matters of discipline (*vinaya*) in preference to many Arahats who belonged to the class of the nobles and warriors (*kshatriya*). Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna, brahmins by birth, because of their long-standing aspirations in former lives, became the chief disciples of the Buddha. The former excelled in wisdom (*paññā*) and the latter in supernormal powers (*iddhi*).

The Buddha never wished to extract from his disciples blind and submissive faith in him or his teachings. He always insisted on discriminative examination and intelligent inquiry. In no uncertain terms did he urge critical investigation when he addressed the inquiring Kālāmas in a discourse that has been rightly called the first charter of free thought:

To take anything on trust is not in the spirit of Buddhism, so we find this dialogue between the Master and the disciples: "If now,

knowing this and preserving this, would you say: 'We honour our Master and through respect for him we respect what he teaches?'" "No, Lord." "That which you affirm, O disciples, is it not only that which you yourselves have recognised, seen and grasped?" "Yes, Lord."<sup>36</sup>

The Buddha faced facts and refused to acknowledge or yield to anything that did not accord with truth. He does not want us to recognize anything indiscriminately and without reason. He wants us to comprehend things as they really are, to put forth the necessary effort and work out our own deliverance with mindfulness.

"You should make the effort  
The Tathāgatas point out the way."<sup>37</sup>

"Bestir yourselves, rise up,  
And yield your hearts unto the Buddha's teaching.  
Shake off the armies of the king of death,  
As does the elephant a reed-thatched shed."<sup>38</sup>

The Buddha for the first time in the world's history taught that deliverance should be sought independent of a saviour, be he human, or divine.

The idea that another raises a man from lower to higher levels of life, and ultimately rescues him, tends to make man indolent and weak, supine and foolish. This kind of belief degrades a man and smothers every spark of dignity from his moral being.

The Enlightened One exhorts his followers to acquire self-reliance. Others may lend us a helping hand indirectly, but deliverance from suffering must be wrought out and fashioned by each one for himself upon the anvil of his own actions.

### **True Purification**

In the understanding of things, neither belief nor fear play any role in Buddhist thought. The truth of the Dhamma can be grasped only through insight, never through blind faith, or through fear of some known or unknown being.

Not only did the Buddha discourage blind belief and fear of the omnipotent God as unsuitable approaches for understanding the truth,



but he also denounced adherence to unprofitable rites and rituals, because the mere abandoning of outward things, such as fasting, bathing in rivers, animal sacrifice and similar acts, do not tend to purify a man, do not make a man holy and noble.

We find this dialogue between the Buddha and the brahmin Sundarika Bhāradvāja: Once the Buddha, addressing the monks, explained in detail how a seeker after deliverance should train himself, and further added that a man whose mind is free from taints, whose life of purity is perfected, and the task done, could be called one who bathes inwardly.

Then Bhāradvāja, seated near the Buddha, heard these words and asked him:

“Does the Venerable Gotama go to bathe in the river Bāhuka?”

“Brahmin, what good is the river Bāhuka? What can the river Bāhuka do?”

“Indeed, Venerable Gotama, the river Bāhuka is believed by many to be holy. Many people have their evil deeds (*pāpa*) washed away in the river Bāhuka.”

Then the Buddha made him understand that bathing in rivers would not cleanse a man of his dirt of evil, and instructed him thus:

“Bathe just here (in this Doctrine and Discipline, *Dhamma-vinaya*), Brahmin, give security to all beings. If you do not speak falsehood, or kill or steal, if you are confident, and are not mean, what does it avail you to go to Gayā (the name of a river in India during the time of the Buddha)? Your well at home is also a Gayā.”<sup>39</sup>

### Caste Problem

Caste, which was a matter of vital importance to the brahmins of India, was one of utter indifference to the Buddha, who strongly condemned the debasing caste system. In his Order of Monks all castes unite as do the rivers in the sea. They lose their former names, castes, and clans, and become known as members of one community—the Sangha.

Speaking of the equal recognition of all members of the order of the Sangha the Buddha says:

“Just as, O monks, the great rivers Gangā, Yamunā, Aciravati, Sarabhū and Mahī reaching the ocean lose their earlier name and identity and come to be reckoned as the great ocean, similarly, O monks, people of the four castes (*vaṇṇas*) ... who leave the household and become homeless recluses under the doctrine and discipline declared by the Tathāgata, lose their previous names and identities and are reckoned as recluses who are sons of Sākya” (*Udāna* 55).

The Buddhist position regarding racism and racial discrimination made explicit at such an early age is one reflected in the moral and scientific standpoint adopted by UNESCO in the present century (Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, UNESCO 1978).<sup>40</sup>

To Sundarika Bhāradvāja, the brahmin who inquired about his lineage, the Buddha answered:

“No Brahmin I, no prince,  
No farmer, or aught else.  
All worldly ranks I know,  
But knowing go my ways  
as simply nobody:  
Homeless, in pilgrim garb,  
With shaven crown, I go  
my way alone, serene.  
To ask my birth is vain.”<sup>41</sup>

On one occasion a caste-ridden brahmin insulted the Buddha saying. “Stop thou shaveling! Stop, thou outcaste!”

The Master, without any feeling of indignation, gently replied:

“Birth maketh not man an outcaste,  
Birth maketh not man a brahmin;  
Action maketh man an outcaste,  
Action maketh man a brahmin.” (Sn. v. 142)

and delivered a whole sermon, the Vasala Sutta, (Sutta Nipāta) explaining to the brahmin in detail the characteristics of one who is really an outcaste (*vasala*). Convinced, the haughty brahmin took refuge in the Buddha. (Read “*The Book of Protection*, p. 91.)



The Buddha freely admitted into the Order people from all castes, and classes when he knew that they were fit to live the holy life, and some of them later distinguished themselves in the Order. The Buddha was the only contemporary teacher who endeavoured to blend in mutual tolerance and concord those who hitherto had been rent asunder by differences of caste and class.

Upāli, who was the chief authority on the Vinaya—the disciplinary rules of the Order—was a barber, regarded as one of the basest occupations of the lower classes. Sunita, who later won Arahathship, was a scavenger, another base occupation. In the Order of Nuns were Puṇṇā and Puṇṇikā, both slave girls. According to Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids, 8 1/2% of the number of those nuns who were able to realize the fruits of their training, were drawn from the despised castes, which were mostly illiterate.<sup>42</sup>

### Chief Disciples

Rājagaha, the capital of the Kingdom of Magadha, was one of the first places visited by the Buddha soon after his Enlightenment. As a wandering ascetic in the early days of his renunciation, he had promised King Seniya Bimbisāra that he would visit Rājagaha when he achieved the object of his search. King Bimbisāra was over-joyed at the sight of the Buddha, and having listened to his teaching, became a lay follower. His devotion to the Buddha became so ardent that within a few days he offered him his pleasure park, Veluvana, for residence.

Rājagaha during that time was a centre of great learning where many schools of philosophy flourished. One such school of thought had as its head Sanjaya; and among his retinue of two hundred and fifty followers were Upatissa and Kolita, who were later to become Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna, the two chief disciples of the Buddha.

One day when Upatissa was walking through the streets of Rājagaha, he was greatly struck by the serene countenance and the quiet, dignified deportment of one of the first disciples of the Buddha, the Arahāt Assaji, who was on his almsround.

All the strenuous endeavours to achieve perfection that Upatissa had made through many a birth were now on the verge of being rewarded. Without going back to his teacher, he followed Arahat Assaji to his resting place, eager to know whom he followed and what teaching he had accepted.

"Friend," said Upatissa, "serene is your countenance, clear and radiant is your glance. Who persuaded you to renounce the world? Who is your teacher? What Dhamma (teaching) do you follow?" The Venerable Assaji, rather reluctant to speak much, humbly said: "I cannot expound the Doctrine and Discipline at length, but I can tell you the meaning briefly." Upatissa's reply is interesting: "Well, friend, tell little or much; what I want is just the meaning. Why speak many words?" Then the Arahat Assaji uttered a single verse which embraces the Buddha's entire doctrine of causality:

*"Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā—tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha  
Tesaṃ ca yo nirodho—Evaṃ vādi mahā samaṇo."*

"Whatever from a cause proceeds, thereof  
The Tathāgata has explained the cause,  
Its cessation too he has explained.  
This is the teaching of the Supreme Sage."

*Vinaya Mahāvagga*

Upatissa instantly grasped the meaning and attained the first stage of realization, comprehending "whatever is of the nature of arising, all that is of the nature of ceasing" (*yaṃkinci samudaya dhammaṃ sabbam taṃ nirodha dhammaṃ*).

With a heart full of joy, he quickly went back to his friend Kolita, told him of his meeting with the Arahat and of the teaching he had received. Kolita, too, like Upatissa, instantly gained the first stage of realization having heard the Dhamma from his friend. Thereon both of them approached Sanjaya and asked him to follow the Buddha. But afraid of losing his reputation as a religious teacher, he refused to do so. Upatissa and Kolita then left Sanjaya much against his protestations, for the Veluvana monastery and expressed their wish to become followers of the Buddha. The Buddha gladly welcomed them saying, "Come, monks, well proclaimed is the Dhamma. Live the holy life for the complete ending of suffering



(*dukkha*)," and took them into the Order. They attained deliverance and became the two chief disciples.

Another great one who joined the Order during the Buddha's stay at Veluvana, was the brahmin sage Mahā Kassapa who had renounced great wealth to find the way to deliverance. It was the Venerable Mahā Kassapa, three months after the Buddha's passing away (*parinibbāna*), who called up the convocation of Arahats (the First Council), at the Sattapanni Cave near Rājagaha under the patronage of King Ajātasattu, to collect and codify the Dhamma-vinaya.

### The Order of Nuns

In the early days of the Order, only men were admitted to the Sangha since the Buddha was reluctant to admit women. But there were many devout women among the lay followers who had a keen desire for a life of renunciation as nuns. Urged by their keenness, Pajāpati Gotami, the foster-mother of the Buddha, in the company of many ladies of rank, approached the Buddha, beseeching him to grant them ordination. But the Buddha still hesitated to accept them. Seeing their discomfiture, and urged by their zeal, the Venerable Ānanda took up their cause and pleaded with the Buddha on their behalf. The Buddha finally yielded to this appeal, placing, however, eight cardinal rules on the ordination of women. Thus was established in the fifth year of his Enlightenment, the Order of the Nuns, the Bhikkhunī Sāsana, for the first time in history, for never before this had there been an Order where woman could lead a celibate life of renunciation. Women from all walks of life joined the order. Foremost in the Order stood the Therīs Khemā and Uppalavaṇṇā. The lives of quite a number of these noble nuns, their strenuous endeavours to win the goal of freedom, and their paeons of joy at deliverance of mind are graphically described in the *Therīgāthā*, the *Psalms of the Sisters*.<sup>43</sup>

### At Kapilavatthu

While at Rājagaha,, the Blessed One heard that his father wished to see him, and he set out for Kapilavatthu. He did not, however, go straight to the palace, but, according to custom, stopped in a grove outside the town. The next day the Buddha, with his bowl, went for

his alms from house to house in the streets of Kapilavatthu. King Suddhodana, startled at the news, rushed to the Buddha and said: "Why, Master, why do you put us to shame? Why do you go begging for your food? Not one of our race has ever done so." Replied the Buddha: "You and your family may claim descent from kings; my descent is from the Buddhas of old; and they, begging their food, always lived on alms." Then explaining the Dhamma the Master said, "Be alert, be mindful, lead a righteous life. The righteous live happily both in this world and the next." And so the king became established in the Path, he realized the Dhamma. The Buddha was then conducted into the palace where all came to pay their respects to him, but not Princess Yasodharā. The Buddha went to her, and the princess, knowing the impassable gulf between them, fell on the ground at his feet and saluted him. Then relating the Candakinnara Jātaka, a story of his previous birth<sup>44</sup> revealing how great her virtue had been in that former life, he made her an adherent to the doctrine. Later when the Buddha was induced to establish a Order for women, Yasodharā became one of the first nuns, and attained Arahatsip, highest sanctity.

When the Buddha was in the palace, Princess Yasodharā arrayed her son Rāhula in all the best attire and sent him to the Blessed One, saying, "That is your father, Rāhula, go and ask for your inheritance."

Prince Rāhula went to the Buddha, stood before him, and said: "Pleasant indeed, is your shadow, sage."

And when the Blessed One had finished his meal and left the palace, Prince Rāhula followed him saying, "Give me my inheritance sage; give me my inheritance." At that the Blessed One spoke to Sāriputta Arahāt: "Well then, Sāriputta, take him into the Order."

Then the Venerable Sāriputta gave Prince Rāhula the ordination.<sup>45</sup> In the Majjhima Nikāya, one of the five original collections in Pali containing the Buddha's discourses, there are three discourses (Nos. 61, 62, 147) entitled Rāhulovāda or exhortations to Rāhula, delivered by the Blessed One to teach the Dhamma to little Rāhula. The discourses are entirely devoted to advice on discipline and meditation. Here is an extract from the Master's exhortation in the Mahā Rāhulovāda Sutta:<sup>46</sup>



“Cultivate the meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā*), Rāhula; for by cultivating loving-kindness, ill will is banished. Cultivate the meditation on compassion (*karuṇā*), Rāhula, for by cultivating compassion, cruelty is banished. Cultivate the meditation on appreciative joy (*muditā*), Rāhula, for by cultivating appreciative joy, aversion is banished. Cultivate the meditation on equanimity (*upekkhā*), Rāhula, for by cultivating equanimity, hatred is banished. Cultivate the meditation on impurity (*asubha*), Rāhula, for by meditating on impurity, lust is banished. Cultivate the meditation on the concept of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), Rāhula, for by meditating on the concept of impermanence, pride of self (*asmi-māna*) is banished. Cultivate the meditation on mindfulness on in-and-out-breathing (*ānāpāna sati*), Rāhula, in-and-out breathing with mindfulness, Rāhula, cultivated and frequently practised, bears much fruit, is of great advantage.”

### Women in Buddhism

Generally speaking, during the time of the Buddha, owing to brahminical influence women were not given much recognition. Sometimes they were held in contempt and in servility to man. It was the Buddha who raised the status of woman and there were cases of women showing erudition in matters of philosophy. In his large-heartedness and magnanimity he always treated women with consideration and civility, and pointed out to them, too, the path to peace, purity and sanctity. Said the Blessed One: “Mother is the friend at one’s home. Wife is the highest friend of the husband.”

The Buddha did not reject the invitation for a meal though Ambapālī<sup>47</sup> was of bad repute. Whatever food she offered he accepted, and in return, gave her the *Dhammadāna*, the gift of truth. She was immediately convinced by the teaching and leaving aside her frivolous lay life, she entered the Order of Nuns. Ardent and strenuous in her religious practices, she then became a saint.

Kisāgotami was another woman to whom the Buddha gave the assistance of his great compassion. Her story is one of the most touching tales recorded in our books. (See below “Women in Buddhist Literature”, pp. 320 ff.) Many more are the instances where the Buddha helped and consoled women who suffered from the vicissitudes of life.

## Ministering to the Sick

Great, indeed, was the Master's compassion for the sick. On one occasion the Blessed One found an ailing monk, Pūtigatta Tissa, with festering ulcers lying on his soiled bed. Immediately the Master prepared hot water, and with the help of the Venerable Ānanda washed him, tenderly nursed him with his own hands, and taught the Dhamma, thus enabling him to win Arahatsip before he died. On another occasion, too, the Master tended a sick monk, and admonished his disciples thus:

"Whosoever, monks, would follow my admonition (would wait upon me, would honour me), he should wait upon the sick."<sup>48</sup>

When the Arahats Tissa passed away, the funeral rites were duly performed and the Buddha caused the relics to be enshrined in a stupa."<sup>49</sup>

The Buddha's *mettā* or loving-kindness was all-pervading and immeasurable. His earnest exhortation to his disciples was:

"Just as with her own life  
a mother shields from hurt  
her own, her only child,  
let all-embracing thoughts  
for all that lives be thine."<sup>50</sup>

Being one who always acted in constant uniformity with what he preached, loving-kindness and compassion dominated his actions always.

While journeying from village to village, from town to town, instructing, enlightening and gladdening the many, the Buddha saw how superstitious folk, steeped in ignorance, slaughtered animals in worship of their gods. He spoke to them:

"Of life, which all can take but none can give,  
Life which all creatures love and strive to keep,  
Wonderful, dear, and pleasant unto each,  
Even to the meanest ..."<sup>51</sup>

Thus when people who prayed to the gods for mercy were merciless, and India was blood-stained with the morbid sacrifices of



innocent animals at the desecrated altars of imaginary deities, and the harmful rites and rituals of ascetics and brahmins brought disaster and brutal agony, the Buddha, the Compassionated One, pointed out the Ancient Path of the Enlightened Ones, of righteousness, love and understanding.

*Mettā* or love is the best antidote for anger in oneself. It is the best medicine for those who are angry with us. Let us then extend love to all who need it with a free and boundless heart. The language of the heart, the language that comes from the heart and goes to the heart is always simple, graceful and full of power.

### Equanimity and Self-Composure

Amid all the vicissitudes of life—gain and loss, repute and ill-repute, praise and censure, pain and happiness,<sup>52</sup> the Buddha never wavered. He was firm as a solid rock. Touched by happiness or by pain he showed neither elation nor depression. He never encouraged wrangling and animosity. Addressing the monks he once said: “I quarrel not with the world, monks, it is the world that quarrels with me. An exponent of the Dhamma quarrels not with anyone in the world.”<sup>53</sup>

He admonished his disciples in these words:

“Monks, if others were to speak ill of me or ill of the Dhamma or ill of the Sangha (the Order), you should not on that account entertain thoughts of enmity and spite, and be worried. If, monks, you are angry and displeased with them, it will not only impede your mental development but you will also fail to judge how far that speech is right or wrong. You should unravel what is untrue and make it all clear. Also, monks, if others speak highly of me, highly of the Dhamma and the Sangha, you need not on that account be elated; for that too will mar your inner development. You should acknowledge what is right and show the truth of what has been said.”<sup>54</sup>

There never was an occasion when the Buddha manifested unfriendliness towards anyone—even to his opponents and enemies. There were those who were against him and his doctrine, yet the Buddha never regarded them as enemies. When others reproached

him in strong terms, the Buddha neither manifested anger nor aversion nor uttered an unkind word.

Said the Buddha:

“As an elephant in battlefield endures the arrows shot from a bow, even so will I endure abuse and unfriendly expression of others.”<sup>55</sup>

### **Devadatta**

A striking example of this mental attitude is seen in his relation with Devadatta. Devadatta was a cousin of the Buddha who entered the Order and gained supernormal powers of the mundane plane (*puthujjana-iddhi*). Later, however, he began to harbour thoughts of jealousy and ill will toward his kinsman, the Buddha, and his two chief disciples, Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna, with the ambition of becoming the leader of the Sangha, the Order of Monks.

Devadatta wormed himself into the heart of Ajātasattu, the young prince, the son of King Bimbisara, and one day when the Blessed One was addressing a gathering at the Veluvana Monastery, where the king, too, was present, Devadatta came unto the Buddha, saluted him and said: “Venerable Sir, you are now enfeebled with age. May the Master lead a life of solitude free from worry and care. I will direct the Order.”

The Buddha rejected this overture and Devadatta departed irritated and disconcerted, nursing hatred and malice toward the Blessed One. Then with the malicious purpose of causing mischief, he went to Prince Ajātasattu, kindled in him the deadly embers of ambition, and said:

“Young man, you had better kill your father and assume kingship lest you die without becoming the ruler. I shall kill the Blessed One and become the Buddha.”

So when Ajātasattu murdered his father and ascended the throne, Devadatta suborned ruffians to murder the Buddha, but failing in that endeavour, he himself hurled down a rock as the Buddha was climbing up Gijjhakūṭa Hill in Rājagaha. The rock precipitated down, broke in two and a splinter slightly wounded the Buddha. Later Devadatta



made an intoxicated elephant charge at the Buddha; but the animal prostrated himself at the Master's feet, overpowered by his loving-kindness. Devadatta now proceeded to cause a schism in the Sangha, but this discord did not last long. Having failed in all his intrigues, Devadatta retired, a disappointed and broken man. Soon afterwards he fell ill, and on his sick-bed, repenting his follies, he desired to see the Buddha. But that was not to be; for he died on the litter while being carried to the Buddha. Before his death, however, he uttered repentance and sought refuge in the Buddha.<sup>56</sup>

### The Last Days

The Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta,<sup>57</sup> the discourse on the passing away of the Blessed One, records in moving detail all the events that occurred during the last months and days of the Buddha's life.

The Blessed One had now reached the ripe age of eighty; his two chief disciples, Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna, had passed away three months earlier. Pajāpati Gotami, Yasodharā and Rāhula were also no more.

The Buddha was now at Vesali, and the rainy season having come, he went together with a great company of monks to Beluva to spend the period of the "rains" there. There a severe sickness fell upon him, causing him much pain and agony, but the Blessed One, mindful and self-possessed, bore it patiently. He was on the verge of death; but he felt he should not pass away without taking leave of the Order. So with a great effort of will he suppressed that illness, and kept his hold on life. His sickness gradually abated, and when quite recovered he called the Venerable Ānanda, his personal attendant, and addressing him said:

"Ānanda, I am now grown old and full of years, my journey is drawing to a close. I have reached my sum of days, I am turning eighty years of age; and just as a worn-out cart, Ānanda, can only with much additional care be made to move along, so the body of the Tathāgata can only be kept going with much infusion of will-power. It is only when the Tathāgata, ceasing to attend on any outward thing and to experience any wordly sensation, attains to the signless (*animitta*) concentration of mind, and dwells in it—it is only then that the body of the Tathāgata is at ease.

“Therefore, Ānanda, be islands unto yourselves. Be your own refuge. Have recourse to none else for refuge. Hold fast to the Dhamma as an island. Hold fast to the Dhamma as a refuge. Resort yourselves to no other refuge. Whosoever, Ānanda, either now or after I am dead, shall be islands unto themselves, and refuge unto themselves, shall betake themselves to no external refuge—it is they, Ānanda, among my disciples who shall reach the very top-most height! But they must be keen to progress.”

From Beluva the Buddha journeyed to the Mahavana, and there, calling up an assembly of all the monks residing in the neighbourhood of Vesali, addressed them saying: “Disciples, the Dhamma realised by me, I have made known to you. Make yourselves masters of the Dhamma, practise it, meditate upon it and spread it abroad; out of pity for the world, for the good and the gain and weal of gods and men.”

The Buddha concluded his exhortation by saying:

“My age is now full ripe, my life drawn to its close;  
I leave you, I depart, relying on myself alone!  
Be earnest then, O disciples, holy full of thought!  
Be steadfast in resolve! Keep watch o’er your own hearts!  
Who wearies not but holds fast to his Truth and Law  
Shall cross this sea of life, shall make an end of grief.”

Worn out with sickness, with feeble limbs, the Blessed One now journeyed on with much difficulty, followed by the Venerable Ānanda and a great company of monks. Even in this last, long, wearisome journey of his, the Buddha never failed in his attention to others. He instructed Cunda, the smith, who offered him his last meal. Then on the way, he stopped for Pukkusa, a disciple of Ālāra Kālāma, replied to all his questions, and so instructed him that Pukkusa offered himself as a follower of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

The Blessed One now reached the Sala Grove of the Mallas at Kusinārā—the journey’s end. Knowing that here would be his last resting place, he told the Venerable Ānanda: “I am weary, Ānanda, and would lie down. Spread over for me the couch with its head to the north between the twin sala trees.”



He then laid himself on his right side, composed and mindful, with one leg resting on the other. Speaking now to the Venerable Ānanda the Blessed One said:

“They who fulfil the greater and lesser duties, they who are correct in life, walking according to the precepts—it is they who rightly honour, reverence and venerate the Tathāgata, the Perfect One, with the worthiest homage. Therefore, Ānanda, be steady in the fulfilment of the greater and the lesser duties, and be correct in life, walking according to the precepts. Thus, Ānanda, should you train yourselves.”

### The Last Convert

At that time, a wandering ascetic named Subhadda, who was at Kusinārā, heard the news of the Blessed One's approaching death; and in order to clear up certain doubts that troubled his mind, hurried to the Sala Grove to speak to the Buddha. The Venerable Ānanda, however, did not wish the Buddha to be disturbed in his last moments, and though Subhadda made several appeals, access to the Master was refused. The Blessed One overheard the conversation. He knew at once that Subhadda was making his investigations with a genuine desire for knowledge; and knowing that Subhadda was capable of quickly grasping the answers, he desired that Subhadda be allowed to see him.

Subhadda's uncertainty was whether the leaders of the other schools of thought such as Pūrana Kassapa, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta and others, had attained a true understanding. The Blessed One then spoke:

“In whatsoever Doctrine and Discipline (*dhmma-vinaya*), Subhadda, the Noble Eightfold Path is not found, neither in it is there found a man of true saintliness of the first, or of the second, or of the third, or of the fourth degree. And in whatsoever Doctrine and Discipline, Subhadda, the Noble Eightfold Path is found, in it is found the man of true saintliness of the first, and the second, and the third, and the fourth degree.<sup>58</sup> Now, in this Doctrine and Discipline, Subhadda is found the Noble Eightfold Path, and in it, too are found the men of true saintliness of all the four degrees. Void are the systems

of other teachers—void of true saints. And in this one, Subhadda, may the brethren live the life that is right, so that the world be not bereft of Arahats.”

Hearing the words of the Blessed One, Subhadda gained confidence, and took refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. Furthermore, he desired to be admitted into the Order, and the Buddha requested the Venerable Ānanda to receive him. Subhadda thus became the last convert and the last disciple of the Blessed One, and ere long by his strenuous effort he attained the final stage of sainthood (*Arahatta*).

### The Last Scene

Now the Blessed One, addressing the Venerable Ānanda, said:

“I have taught the Dhamma, Ānanda, without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine, for in respect of the Truth, Ānanda, the Tathāgata has no such thing as the ‘closed fist’ of a teacher who hides some essential knowledge from the pupil.

“It may be, Ānanda, that in some of you the thought may arise, ‘The word of the Master is ended. We have no teacher any more.’ But it is not thus, Ānanda, that you should regard.

“The Doctrine and the Discipline (*dhamma-vinaya*) which I have set forth and laid down for you, let them, after I am gone, be your teacher. It may be monks, that there may be doubts in the minds of some brethren as to the Buddha, or the Dhamma, or the Path (*magga*), or Method (*paṭipadā*). Inquire, monks, freely. Do not have to reproach yourselves afterwards with the thought: ‘Our teacher was face to face with us, and we could not bring ourselves to inquire of the Exalted One when we were face to face with him.’ ”

When the Buddha had thus spoken the monks were silent.

A second and a third time the Blessed One repeated the words to the monks, and yet the monks were silent. And the Venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One. “How wonderful a thing is it, Lord, how marvellous! Verily, I believe that in this whole assembly of the monks there is not one who has any doubt or misgivings as to the Buddha or the Dhamma, or the Path or the Method.”



The Blessed One confirmed the words of the Venerable Ānanda, adding that in the whole assembly, even the most backward one was assured of final deliverance. And after a short while the Master made his final exhortation to those who wished to follow his Teaching now and in the future.

“Behold now, O monks, I exhort you: impermanent are all compounded things. Work out your deliverance with mindfulness” (*vaya dhammā samkhārā, appamādena sampādettha*).<sup>59</sup>

These were the last words of the Buddha.

Then the Master entered into those nine successive stages of meditative absorption (*jhāna*) which are of increasing sublimity: first the four fine-material absorptions (*rūpa-jhāna*), then the four immaterial absorptions (*arūpa-jhāna*), and finally the state where perceptions and sensations entirely cease (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*). Then he returned through all these stages to the first fine-material absorption and rose again to the fourth one. Immediately after having re-entered this stage (which has been described as having “purity of mindfulness due to equanimity”) the Buddha passed away (*parinibbāyi*). He realized Nibbāna that is free from any substratum of further becoming (*parinibbāna*).<sup>60</sup>

In the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta are recorded, in moving detail, all the events that occurred during the last months and days of the Master’s life.

In the annals of history, no man is recorded as having so consecrated himself to the welfare of all beings, irrespective of caste, class, creed or sex as the Supreme Buddha. From the hour of his Enlightenment to the end of his life, he strove tirelessly and unostentatiously, regardless of the fatigue involved, and oblivious to the many obstacles and handicaps that hampered his way, to elevate humanity. He never relaxed in his exertion for the common weal and was never subjected to moral or spiritual fatigue. Though physically he was not always fit, mentally he was ever vigilant and energetic.

Therefore it is said:

“Ah, wonderful is the Conqueror,  
who e’er untiring strives,

For the blessings of all beings,  
for the comfort of all lives."

Though twenty-five centuries have gone since the passing away of the Buddha, his message of love and wisdom still exists in its purity, decisively influencing the destinies of humanity. Forests of flowers are daily offered at his shrines and countless millions of lips daily repeat the formula: *Buddham saranam gacchāmi*, "I take refuge in the Buddha." His greatness yet glows today like a sun that blots out lesser lights, and his Dhamma yet beckons the weary pilgrim to Nibbāna's security and peace.

### Notes:

1. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta: Signet Press, 1946) p. 143.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
3. In Sanskrit, Siddhārtha (personal name), Gautama (family name).
4. Warrior class.
5. Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia*.
6. *Idem*.
7. A. 146.
8. For a detailed account see M. 36 trans. by I.B. Horner in *Middle Length Sayings*, Vol. I (P.T.S.). See also R. Abeysekara, "The Master's Quest for Light" (Kandy. BPS) BL A7.
9. Mahā Saccaka Sutta, M. 36.
10. Elsewhere we see the defilment of false view (*diṭṭhāsava*) added to these as the fourth taint.
11. M. 36; M. 249.
12. Dh. vv, 153-154. Trans. by Ñāṇamoli Thera.
13. A Bodhisatta (Skt. *Bodhisattva*) is one who adheres to or is bent on (*satta*) the ideal of enlightenment, or knowledge of the Four Noble Truths (*bodhi*). In this sense, the term may be applied to anyone who is bent on enlightenment. But it is specially applied to an aspirant for full enlightenment (*sammā-sambodhi*). A Bodhisatta fully cultivates ten perfections or *pārami* which are essential qualities of extremely high standard initiated by compassion, and ever tinged with understanding or quick wit, free from craving, pride and false views (*taṇhā*, *diṭṭhi* and *māna*) that qualify an aspirant for Buddhahood. They are: *dāna*, *sīla*, *nekkhamma*, *paññā*, *virīya*, *khanti*, *sacca*, *adhiṭṭhāna*, *mettā* and *upekkhā*—generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, effort, forbearance, truthfulness, determination, loving-kindness and equanimity.



14. *2500 Years of Buddhism*, Foreward, ix, Government of India, 1971.
15. Vin. I.10; V, 420.
16. S. iii, 66.
17. Ud. 1. *See also* Dependent Arising in this volume.
18. At this time there was as yet no Order (*sangha*).
19. Vin. I. Mahavagga.
20. M. 26/I. 167-168.
21. *Ibid*.
22. For a comprehensive explanation of these truths, see the author's *The Buddha's Ancient Path* (Kandy: BPS); Ñāṇamoli, *Three Cardinal Discourses* (Kandy: BPS) Wheel 17; Francis Story, *The Four Noble Truths* (Kandy: BPS) Wheel 34/35; Ñyanatiloka, *The Word of the Buddha* (Kandy: BPS).
23. Dhamma-cakka-pavattana Sutta, S.v, 420.
24. S.v, 437.
25. M. 22/I, 140.
26. S.v, 588; M. 92; Vin. I, 245; Thag. v, 828.
27. In 273 B.C. Emperor Asoka came on pilgrimage to this holy spot and caused a series of monuments and a commemorative pillar with the lion capital to be erected. This capital with its four magnificent lions upholding the *Dharma-cakra*, "The Wheel of Dharma," now stands in the museum of Sarnath, Benares, and is today the official crest of India. The *Dharma-cakra* festival is still held in Sri Lanka.  

Jawaharlal Nehru writes: "At Sarnath near Benares, I would almost see the Buddha preaching his first sermon, and some of his recorded words would come like a distant echo to me through two thousand five hundred years. Asoka's pillars of stone with their inscriptions would speak to me in their magnificent language and tell me of a man who, though an emperor, was greater than any king or emperor." *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta: Signet Press 1946), p.44.
28. The "rains" or "retreat" is the three months of seclusion during the rainy season, i.e. from July to October in India.
29. Vin. I, Mahavagga.
30. In a way, it is interesting to note that this greatest of Indian Rishis (seers) was born under a tree in a park, attained Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree (the south branch of which was brought to Sri Lanka by Sanghamitta, the Arahant Theri, daughter of Asoka the Great of India, 3d century B.C., still flourishes at Anuradhapura, and is the oldest recorded tree in the world), set in motion the Wheel of Dhamma at the Deer Park under trees, and finally passed away under the twin sala trees. He spent most of his time in the open in forests and in villages of India.

31. The whole of this discourse is at A.iv, 354; U.p.34, and in brief at *Dhammapada Commentary*, I, 287. In the elder's verse (66) in Theragāthā, it is said that the Venerable Meghiya was of a Sākya rājā's family. The Dhammapada verses (33, 34) are as follows:  
The unsteady fickle mind hard to guard and hard to control, the wise man straightens even as a fletcher, an arrow.  
Like a fish jerked out of its watery abode and cast on land, this mind quakes, (therefore) the realm of Māra (passions) should be abandoned.
32. Ariya-pariyesana Sutta, M.26/I, 264.
33. The word is applied only to those who have fully destroyed the taints. In this sense the Buddha was the first Arahat in the world as he himself revealed to Upaka.
34. S. iii, 66.
35. Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, D.16/II, 100.
36. M. 38/I, 264.
37. Dh.p. v. 276.
38. S.i,156.
39. Vatthūpama Sutta, M.7. See also: Nyanaponika Thera, *The Simile of the Cloth*, Wheel 61/62 (Kandy: BPS).
40. P.D. Premasiri, "The Buddhist Concept of A Just Social & Political Order," *Young Buddhist*, Singapore.
41. Sn. vv. 455, 456, Chalmer's translation (Harvard Oriental Series).
42. See: G.P. Malalasekera and K.N. Jayatilleke, *Buddhism and the Race Question* (Kandy: BPS) Wheel 220/201.
43. *Psalms of the Early Buddhists—The Sisters*, trans. by C.F. Rhys Davids, P.T.S. Translation Series; See also p. 291 ff.
44. Jātaka 485.
45. Vin. I, Mahāvagga: Read Piyadassi Thera and J.F. Dickson, *Ordination in Theravāda Buddhism* (Kandy: BPS) Wheel 56.
46. Discourse 62. For a full translation see *Advice to Rāhula* (Kandy: BPS) Wheel 33.
47. C.F. Rhys Davids, *Psalms of the Early Buddhists—The Sisters*, P.T.S. p 120.
48. Vinaya Mahāvagga, Civarakkhandhaka. See also: I.B. Horner, *Book of the Discipline*, Part 4, p. 431.
49. "To the north-east of the monastery of Jetavana," wrote General Alexander Cunningham in his Archaeological Report, 1862-3, "there was a *stūpa* built on the spot where the Buddha had washed the hands and feet of a sick monk ... The remains of the *stūpa* still exist in a mass of solid brick work at a distance of 550 feet from the Jetavana Monastery."



In General Cunningham's map of Savatthi (modern Sahet-Mahet), the site of this stupa is marked H. in the plan. Archaeological Survey of India (Simla 1871), p. 341.

50. Metta Sutta, *Sutta Nipāta*, 149, 149, Chalmer's Trans. (Harvard Oriental Series).
51. Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia*.
52. These are the *aṭṭha loka-dhamma*, the eight vicissitudes of life.
53. Samyutta Nikāya, ii, 138.
54. Dīgha Nikāya (Brahmajāla Sutta), I, 3.
55. Dhammapada, v. 310.
56. Comy. on the Dhammapada, Vol. I, p.147.
57. Dīgha Nikāya, 16; translated as *Last Days of the Buddha* (Kandy: BPS).
58. These four stages are: *sotāpatti*, (stream-entry); *sakadāgāmi*, (once-return); *anāgāmi*, (non-return); and *arahatta*, (the final stage of sainthood). Arahatsip is the stage at which fetters are severed and taints rooted out.
59. D. 16, Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, in which are recorded in moving detail all the events that occurred during the last months and days of the Master's life.
60. The passages in quotations are taken with slight alterations from the "Book of the Great Decease" in *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Part II, Dīgha Nikāya, Part II.

## Venerable Ananda, the Faithful Attendant

The Venerable Ananda was born into a kshatriya family. The members of the royalty belonged to the kshatriya clan which was the highest during the time of the Buddha. King Suddhodana, the kshatriya, was the father of Siddhattha Gotama, the Buddha. King Amitodana was a brother of Suddhodana. Ananda, the son of Amitodana, and therefore cousin of the Buddha, was born on a Vesak Day, the full moon day of the month of May, the same day as the Buddha. And because the kinsfolk said "he is born bringing happiness and joy," (*ānanda*) so they named him.

He entered the Order as a disciple of the Buddha. Not long after his ordination, he listened to a discourse of the Elder Puṇṇa and attained the first stage of sanctity (*sotāpatti*). He had the privilege of being the personal attendant of the Buddha. In majesty of physique and in the magnetic personality and general popularity, Ven. Ananda was second only to the Buddha. It is said that he was outstandingly handsome, pleasing to behold, pleasant in every way, learned and adorned the Order of the Sangha.

When Ven. Ananda offered to serve the Buddha, he consented on condition that the Buddha would grant him the following eight boons lest people say: "Who cannot be a Buddha's attendant if he can enjoy the privileges, favours and benefits from the Buddha?":

- i. The Buddha should not give him (Ven. Ananda) robes which he himself had received.
- ii. The Buddha should not give him food which he had received.
- iii. The Buddha should not allow him to dwell in the same chamber.
- iv. The Buddha should not take him with him wherever the Buddha is invited.



- v. The Buddha should kindly go with him wherever he (Ananda) is invited.
- vi. The Buddha should kindly give him permission to introduce visitors that come from afar to see the Buddha.
- vii. The Buddha should kindly grant him permission to approach him whenever any doubt should arise.
- viii. The Buddha should kindly repeat to him the discourses that were declared in his absence.

The Buddha granted these four negative and positive boons. Thenceforward Ven. Ananda acted as the Buddha's attendant until the Buddha's last moment. He never left duties undone. His genuine love and unfaltering dedicated devotion to the Buddha, as attendant and associate for twenty-five years, is ineffable and unequalled.

He was more than a loyal and constant attendant, he was also the Buddha's "secretary" and trusty adherent. His services were manifold; he cared for the Buddha like a loving mother. There never was a person, clergy or laity, who associated with the Buddha so closely. Ven. Ananda is the most mentioned and spoken of disciple in the Buddha's discourses. His praise has been sung on many occasions in the Pali Canon.

In the words of the Buddha he was the foremost and best of all attendants that ministered to him. Hear these words of the Elder Ananda:

“ For five-and-twenty years on the Exalted One  
I waited, serving him by loving deeds,  
and like his shadow followed after him.

For five-and twenty years on the Exalted One  
I waited, serving him with loving thoughts,  
and like his shadow followed after him.

When pacing up and down, the Buddha walked,  
Behind his back I kept the pace always;  
and when the Norm was being taught, in me  
knowledge and understanding of it grew.”

*Psalms of the Brethren, 1841-44*

He was the monk most adored and admired by the members of the fair sex. Venerable Ananda, who was an able preacher, possessed peerless beauty of form and a sweet, inspiring, melodious voice; he was full of compassion and had winsome and amiable ways and a pleasant demeanour. As a result of these salient characteristics and qualities, queens and princesses, nuns and women of any kind, whether of high or low social position, with or without good manners and refinement, took intense delight in seeing him and listening to his sermons, delivered in a voice of delicate cadence and intelligible language.

Some of the ordinary bhikkhunis and women cherished strong affection and passionate feelings towards him. Nevertheless it is said that he never cared for such affection or tender feelings. Although he had attained only *sotāpatti*, the first stage of sanctity, and was therefore, a learner (*sekha*), thoughts of sense desire found no place in his heart. He could not be swept off his feet by the glamour of things sensual. He never did anything mean or beneath his dignity. Venerable Ananda has definitely stated that he never entertained any thoughts of carnal pleasure during the twenty-five years he was associated with the Buddha as his personal attendant.

“For five-and-twenty years a learner I,  
No sensual consciousness arose in me.  
O see the seemly order of the Norm.”

*Psalms of the Brethren, 1039*

Ven. Ananda, who was not an Arahant, a Consummate One, when he heard from the Buddha that he would pass away before long, he was sorrow-stricken and left the Buddha, clasped a doorjamb and sobbed his heart out. His services done for the Buddha, the privileges he had from the Buddha, how he followed the Buddha like his shadow, how he daily, at night, went round the Buddha's abode with lamp in hand by way of “protecting” the Buddha—all these past events he called to mind.

The Buddha, not seeing Ananda, had him summoned and said to him: “Do not weep, Ananda, do not feel sad; have I not told you that all meetings end in partings and that all things animate or inanimate are impermanent and subject to change. For a long time, Ananda, you



have attended me dutifully and with a loving heart. Put forth the necessary effort and work out your deliverance by attaining Arahatsip, the highest stage of sanctity."

Then the Buddha turned to the monks, praised Ananda and said: "Monks, there are in Ananda, four remarkable virtues. What are they? Those monks who come to see me meet Ananda first. No sooner they meet Ananda than they are impressed by the demeanour of Ananda; when he talks to them, they become more impressed; when he gives them a short sermon they are so happy and want to hear more from him; when Ananda is silent those bhikkhus are delighted to see him in silence."

Ven. Ananda was also among the pre-eminent ones. He was singled out for honour. The Buddha ranked him chief among his disciples in five respects: wide learning (*bahussutānaṃ*), retentive memory (*satimantānaṃ*), good behaviour and quick wit (*gati-mantānaṃ*), resolute (*dhitimantānaṃ*), ministering care (*upaṭṭha-kānaṃ*) (A.ii, 24).

Three months after the passing away of the Buddha, on the eve of the session of the Sangha Council, Ven. Ananda, applying calm and insight meditation (*samatha-vipassanā*), attained arahatsip or highest sanctity and was ready to go before the Council as an Arahata, a Consummate One, to answer all the questions regarding the Sutta Piṭaka or the Collection of the Discourses. Ven. Ananda answered by saying, "Thus have I heard (*evaṃ me sutāṃ*) from the Buddha." Most of the discourses begin with Ven. Ananda's utterance: "Thus have I heard."

Ven. Ananda lived up to one hundred and twenty years. Before he breathed his last, the Elder Ananda said:

"The Master hath my fealty and love,  
And all the Buddha's ordinance is done.  
Low have I laid the heavy load I bore,  
Cause for rebirth is found in me no more."

*Psalms of the Brethren, 1050*

### 3

## The Buddha As a Master Mind

A dispassionate student of Buddhism who carefully reads through the books of early Buddhism is everywhere confronted with a dynamic personality, a man who had attained supreme Enlightenment and security from bondage through moral, intellectual and spiritual perfection, a teacher who worked with indefatigable zeal and steel determination to propagate the truth he had realized. That dynamic personality is the Buddha.

The Buddha was not one more philosopher among others, but an enlightened sage whose teaching was destined to revolutionize the thought and life of the human race. His self-sacrificing zeal, boundless love, kindness and tolerance combined with his remarkable personality, aroused those who followed him from their slumber of ignorance and awakened them to a realization of truth.

His teaching originated in northern India but its message was universal in appeal. The Buddha spoke to all humanity and for all time. His Doctrine and Discipline (*dhamma-vinaya*) are for all human beings whatever language they speak, whatever dress they wear, whatever country they call "home." The Buddha's language is truth, he was clothed in truth, and the whole world was his "home"; for truth is everywhere for all time to be realized by each one individually. This is what is meant by the universality of the Buddha-dhamma or Buddhism. Truth spoken of in Buddhism is not conceptual, and therefore cannot be transmitted by means of words alone. While an Enlightened One can guide us by showing the way to truth, we ourselves must pursue the method of meditation to realize truth and make it our own.

The Buddha was a Master Mind. He developed this master mind through successive lives by dint of meditation and other forms of



spiritual upliftment. Hence it is that he could comprehend and declare profound truths regarding life, its significance and purpose. But the average person interested in Buddhism today is not so much concerned with these profound truths themselves, but with learning how he can bring about a practical solution to the doubts and difficulties that confound and confuse him in his attempt to obtain happiness in life.

One profound truth that the Master Mind has declared is the great power of the mind. In answering a question asked by one of his disciples, he expounded this truth with great force, thus: "The world is led by mind, by mind the world is drawn along; all have gone under the sway of the mind."<sup>1</sup> Science has not yet fully explored the powers of the mind, but the Buddha realized its supremacy in all aspects of life over 2,500 years ago. Early Buddhism ascribes to the mind a great power which must be cultivated in order to attain that highest goal, Nibbāna (Nirvāna). Buddhism, while not denying the world of matter and the great effect that the physical world has on mental life, emphasises the greater importance of the human mind. The power of the mind is a very real thing.

Many people seeking for inspiration and happiness from outside sources have been disappointed. Only when one realizes the supremacy of the mind and understands that one's own mind can make this world a heaven or hell for him, will one learn how to be happy. The Master Mind gives further help, for it is said in the Dhammapada (165):

"By oneself is evil done and  
by oneself is one defiled.  
By oneself is evil left undone and  
by oneself is one purified.  
Purity and impurity depend on oneself.  
No one can purify another."

Again the Master Mind has said: "You yourself should strive, the Buddhas are pointers to the path."<sup>2</sup> These valuable truths teach man to find happiness in himself and through himself.

Another profound truth coming from the Master Mind states:

“Impermanent are all component things,  
 They arise and cease, that is their nature;  
 They come into being and pass away,  
 Release from them is bliss supreme” (D. ii, 157).

“Everything that has the nature of arising has the nature of ceasing.” This change is of the essence of things. Man is unhappy because all that he cherishes—wife and children, wealth and power—does not last forever. In any walk of life one sees the same anxiety to preserve what one holds dear. It is only when man realizes the profound truth about the impermanence of all things that he will school himself to abandon craving, for it is craving that brings unhappiness. In this connection here is another profound utterance of the Master Mind:

“From craving arises grief,  
 from craving arises fear;  
 to him who is free from craving there is no grief,  
 what of fear?” (Dhp. v, 216).

The Buddha was sometimes more concerned with therapeutic ends than with objective analysis. But in the main what really concerned him was the analytic view of things, for this alone helps one to understand things as they really are. Through meditation the Buddha discovered the deep-rooted universal maladies of the human heart and mind. His remarkable insight into the workings of the mind make the Buddha a master mind, a psychologist, and a scientist of the highest eminence. Admittedly, his way of arriving at these truths of mental life was not always experimental; yet what the Buddha discovered remains true, and has, in fact, been corroborated by the experimentalist. But the Buddha's purpose in engaging in these inquiries is quite different from that of the scientist. The scientist is concerned with gaining objective knowledge of nature, but the Buddha's statements about the nature of the mind and matter are directed towards deliverance, supreme security from bondage. His teachings place so much emphasis on mind and mental phenomena because these play the crucial role in the genesis of action. In Buddhism the basis is mind: “Mind precedes things; mind dominates them; mind creates them” (Dhp. v, 1).



The Buddha was a human being. Even after he became a Buddha he did not claim to be a divine being, a God or Brahma, who creates the world and sits in judgement over the destinies of humanity. He was a MAN among men. Asked who he was the answer came: "I am one awake" and he summed up his attainments in these words:

"I know what should be known, what should  
Be cultivated I have cultivated.  
What should be abandoned that I have abandoned,  
Hence, I am BUDDHA, the Awakened One" (Sn. v, 558).

His followers, knowing that happiness and suffering are consequences of one's own deeds and misdeeds, do not pray to him and do not expect from him rewards and punishments. They take refuge in the Buddha in the understanding that his life and teaching offer them a model and guide. By following his teachings they are able to rise from lower to higher levels of mental life, and finally to reach that bliss which results from the highest spiritual development, the bliss of Nibbāna.

The Buddha can also be called a revolutionary in the eminent sense of the word. His main aim was to bring about a change in man's inner life, the world within, and to point out the way to mental purity, peace and happiness. But he found that Indian society was badly in need of radical change, for there was so much social inequality, economic and social discrimination. As far as economic inequality was concerned, the Buddha was successful in bringing about a stable economic security in the community of monks and nuns. Whatever land, monastery and gift donated by the laity to the Order (Sangha) were always the property of the community, and not of the individual.

However, the Master opposed all social discrimination. When communicating the Dhamma in his teachings, he made no distinctions of caste, clan, class, sex or any other division. Men and women from different walks of life—the rich and the poor, the lowliest and the highest, the literate and the illiterate, brahmins and outcastes, princes and paupers, saints and criminals—listened to the Buddha, took refuge in him, and followed the path to peace and enlightenment which he pointed out to them. This path is open to all.

Being one who acted in constant conformity with what he preached, the Buddha always based his actions on the four sublime states (*brahmavihāra*): loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic or appreciative joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*). The Buddha is known as one who has dropped the cudgel (*nihita daṇḍa*), one who has dropped the weapon (*nihita sattha*). The only weapon he successfully wielded was that of love and compassion. He armed himself with truth and loving compassion.

He was the greatest walker in the world. He walked and walked the highways and byways of India enfolding all within the aura of his boundless love and wisdom.

He moved among men and women, not as a superman or an incarnation of a god, but as very man himself. In fact, it is his essential humanity that shines out most brilliantly through the canonical records of his life and activities. He made people understand that all could become enlightened ones (Buddhas) provided they cultivate the essential qualities that lead to enlightenment.

The Buddha had a quick sense of humour and graciousness of manner which endeared him to all who came in contact with him. However, it is rather amusing to observe that some of his contemporaries, especially members of other faiths, were frightened of the Buddha and dared not send their disciples and followers to him lest they be converted to his faith. This is clear from the following:

Once Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta (Jaina Mahāvīra) wished to send his well-known lay disciple, Upāli, to the Buddha to refute his words on a point of controversy. Then Dīghatapassin the Jaina, speaking to Nātaputta said: "To me, venerable sir, it is not at all desirable that Upāli should refute the words of the recluse Gotama. For the recluse Gotama is deceitful; he knows a magic spell by which he entices disciples of other sects (*Gotamo māyāvi āvaṭṭanim māyaṇi jānāti*)" (M. 56; A. ii, 190).

They perhaps were not aware that it was the Buddha's *mettā*, his large love and kindliness, that attracted people to him and not any "enticing device."



The Buddha was an embodiment of *mettā*, an exponent of loving-kindness by precept and example. In debate he was calm and met opposition without being ruffled, without showing anger. Sacca, the controversialist, at the end of a debate with the Buddha, could not help saying: "It is wonderful, it is marvellous, good Gotama, while thus being spoken to so insistently, while thus being violently attacked with accusing words, the good Gotama's colour was clear, and his countenance happy like that of an Arahāt, an Accomplished One, a supremely Enlightened One" (M. 36).

Even when people were scurrilously offensive and reproached him in strong terms, the Buddha never lost countenance. It is mentioned that he smiled, always his smile preceded his speech (*mihita-pubbangamā*).

Ernest F. Fenollosa observes: "The impression of this figure (of the Buddha), as one views it for the first time, is one of intense holiness. No serious, broadminded Christian could quite free himself from the impulse to bow down before its sweet powerful smile."

No human quality is a prerogative of a particular religion, nation, race or culture. All those who have eyes to see and minds to understand will realize that such qualities as friendship, pity and large-heartedness are common to all humanity. But when people are misguided and misled, they speak of and plan "just wars"—we even read of "holy wars." War is war; "just" or "holy," it is never peace. All war is barbarous.

An incident once brought the Buddha to the battlefield. The Sākya and the Koliya, who were two neighbouring states, were on the verge of war over the waters of the river Rohini. Knowing the disaster ahead, the Master then approached them and asked them which was more precious, water or human blood. They admitted human blood was more precious. The Master spoke to them and the intended war was prevented.<sup>4</sup>

In the field of religion and philosophy, the greatest revolution was brought about by the Buddha when he criticized the concept of *atta* or *ātman*, permanent soul, self or ego. The doctrine of *anattā*, no soul, is exclusively Buddhist. The Buddha has pointed out that the being whom, for all purposes we call a man, woman or individual, is

not something static but dynamic—a conflux of mind and body in constant and continuous change.

Now when a person sees life in this light and understands analytically his being as a succession of mental and bodily aggregates, he sees things as they really are. He does not hold the wrong view of “personality belief” (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*)—the belief in a permanent, everlasting, unchanging substance, an imperishable soul or self—because he knows through right understanding that all phenomenal existence is causally dependent (*paṭicca samuppanna*). Seeing that everything is conditioned by something else, and exists relative to that condition, he understands there is no “I,” no persisting ego principle, no self nor anything pertaining to a self either in this life process or outside of it. He is therefore free from the notion of a Microcosmic Soul (*jīvātmā*) or a Macrocosmic Soul (*paramātmā*), or even a Cosmic Soul.

The Buddha did not approve of any permanent *ātman*, soul or self, great or small, for they are only projections of the mind. He asks:

“When an *ātman*, soul or self is not to be found is it not foolish to speak of the universe as the *ātman* or self, and to say, ‘I shall be that *ātman* after death, permanent, everlasting, unchanging, and shall exist as *ātman* for eternity?’”<sup>5</sup>

He in whom the idea of a soul or self is deep-rooted gets scared and worries when he hears that all his cherished views will be destroyed and that he will be annihilated, and so he entertains the idea of a permanent *ātman*, soul or self for his own self-preservation. That is why the Buddha admonishes his followers to regard him not as a Saviour who saves the souls of his creatures, but as a Teacher who guides them on the right path and urges them to have self-reliance. He has also explained to his disciples that when he has passed away, they should seek refuge and protection in themselves as well as in the Dhamma, the teaching, and not elsewhere (*attasaraṇā anaññasaraṇā dhammasaraṇā anaññasaraṇā*).<sup>6</sup>

Some scholars, however, cannot accept this doctrine of non-self, and therefore try to distort the Buddha’s teaching to make it affirm the notion of “self” (*atta*). Radhakrishnan, for example, mistranslated the Dhammapada verse 160 thus: “The self is the lord of self, who else should be the lord? With self well subdued, a man finds a lord such as



few can find.”<sup>7</sup> But here the word “*atta*” has nothing to do with a soul or a self. It is used as a reflexive or indefinite pronoun meaning myself, yourself, himself, oneself, etc. Here is a correct rendering: “Oneself is one’s own protector (refuge). Who else could the protector be? With oneself well-controlled, one obtains a protection which is difficult to obtain.”

These translators also have misunderstood the key word “*nātha*,” which means protection, refuge, help, and not “lord.” The commentary on the verse says: “*nātho ti patiṭṭhā*”; *nātha* means protection (support, refuge, help). Think of the negative word “*a-nātha*.” Does it mean “lordless”? No, it means without support, without protection, helpless. The incorrect translation gives the erroneous notion of a big self controlling a small self, the macrocosmic soul commanding the microcosmic.

Some people have been inclined to think that Buddhism can be compared with Marxian philosophy as both Buddhism and Marxism deny a permanent God and a permanent soul. But it would be erroneous to say that Buddhism influenced Marx’s philosophy, or that Buddhism ever came anywhere near the fundamentals of Marxism. The Buddha’s teaching of moral causation (*kamma*), life before birth, life after death (*punabbhava*), and supreme security from bondage (*Nibbāna*), are foreign to Marxism.

Marxists believe that nothing exists apart from matter. For them even the mind is a product of matter; they believe that after the dissolution of the physical body, it is the “personality” which ceases to exist.

To the Buddhist the question of religion and its origin is not a metaphysical one, but a psychological and intellectual one. To him religion is no mere creed or code of revelation, or fear of the unknown, or fear of a supernatural being who rewards the good deeds and punishes the ill deeds of his creatures. It is not a theological concern, but rather a psychological and intellectual concern resulting from the experience of *dukkha*, that is suffering, conflicts and unsatisfactoriness of the empirical existence of the nature of life.

When we consider the doctrinal contents of Buddhism, we can see that the Buddha’s teaching differs from other systems of religion

in which the central feature is the concept of a creator God. There is much religion in Buddhism, but it cannot be included among the religions which centre around God and supernatural forces. Buddhism does not recognize a permanent creator God and does not advocate any prescribed system of ritual worship and supplication of deities. There is no belief in a higher unseen power controlling man's destiny. In Buddhism man attributes all his attainments and achievements to his own effort and understanding. Buddhism is anthropocentric and not theocentric. Thus to a Buddhist, religion is a way of life in the sense of a way of moral, spiritual and intellectual training leading to the highest attainment of insight, which puts an end to all suffering and repeated existence and issues in complete freedom of the mind.

Looked at from the point of view of philosophy, the Buddha was not concerned with the problems that have worried philosophers both of the East and the West from ancient time to the present. In his view these metaphysical problems only confuse man and upset his mental equilibrium. Their solution, he knew, will not prevent a person from suffering, from the unsatisfactory nature of life. That was why he hesitated to answer such questions, and at times refrained from explaining those which were wrongly formulated.

The challenge of Buddhism was instrumental in compelling religious thinkers to review their old definition of religion, and to find a new definition capable of accommodating Buddhism. The Buddhist method of grasping the highest truth, of awakening from ignorance to full knowledge, does not depend on mere academic intellectual development, but on the adoption of a practical teaching. It is this happy combination of theory and practice that leads to Enlightenment and final deliverance.

#### Notes:

1. A. ii, 117.
2. Dh. v, 276.
3. Vin. i, 10; S. v, 420.
4. AA. i, 241; SnA. 357; Thag A. 141.
5. Alagaddūpama Sutta, M. 22, 138.
6. Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, D. 16, 100.
7. S. Radhakrishnan, *Gautama the Buddha* (Hind Kitabs, Bombay: 1945), p. 50.



## The Buddha's Dynamic Path

"Tangle within, tangle without, mankind is entangled in a tangle. I ask this question, Gotama. Who disentangles this tangle?"

"When the wise man well established in virtue (*sīla*) develops concentration (*citta-samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*), then as a bhikkhu ardent and prudent, he disentangles this tangle."<sup>1</sup>

This question was posed to the Buddha by a certain deity, and the statement that follows it is the Buddha's answer. This short but expressive reply contains the entire teaching of the Noble Eightfold Path, the last of the Four Noble Truths proclaimed by the Buddha in his first sermon.

It is clear from the Buddha's reply that the basic requirement for disentangling the tangles is the three-fold training (*sikkhā*) in virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*citta* or *samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*).

"Tangle" (*jaṭā*), in this context means the network of craving or greed. As this tangle arises in respect of one's own person and that of another, and in respect of the internal and external bases, it is called the inner tangle and the outer tangle. The Buddha has clearly pointed out that this tangle is the chief fetter that keeps beings bound to the cycle of repeated birth and death.

"Monks, I do not see any other single fetter bound by which beings for a long, long time wander and hurry through the round of existence, like the fetter of craving (*taṇhā samyojana*). Truly, monks bound by this fetter of craving, beings wander and hurry through the round of existence."<sup>2</sup>

In Buddhist thought craving is threefold: sensual craving (*kāma-taṇhā*), craving for continued existence or self-preservation (*bhava-taṇhā*) and craving for self-annihilation (*vibhava-taṇhā*).

This craving, this thirst of blinded beings, has caused hatred and all other suffering. It is not nuclear weapons but lust, hatred and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*) that are most destructive to man. Bombs and weapons are created by man's lust to conquer and possess, by his hatred that leads to killing, by his delusion both to conquer and destroy. The thirst for fame, power and domination has brought untold agony to mankind. If a man makes no efforts to check the longings that are ever ready to sway his mind, he will become their slave. He is then no longer superior to the beast, for they both eat, sleep and satisfy their sexual appetite. The beast, however, cannot develop spiritually, while man can. He possesses latent qualities which can be used for his own and others' welfare. But if he does not examine his own mind, develop wholesome thoughts and discard repulsive ones, his life lacks drive and inspiration.

### Four Truths

What the Buddha taught embraces the Four Noble Truths, namely: *dukkha*, suffering, conflicts or unsatisfactoriness of life, its arising, its cessation, and the way out of this unsatisfactory state. One who thinks deeply will interpret these Truths as a human being and his goal, final deliverance; that is the sum total of the Four Noble Truths.

To those who view the sentient world with dispassionate discernment, one thing becomes abundantly clear: there is only one problem in the world, that of suffering, *dukkha*. All other problems known and unknown are included in this, which is universal in range. As the Buddha says: "The world is established on suffering, is founded on suffering" (*dukkhe loko patitthito*).<sup>3</sup> If anything becomes a problem, there is bound to be suffering, unsatisfactoriness, and conflict—conflict between desires and the facts of life. And naturally our every endeavour is to solve the problem, to remove the unsatisfactoriness, to control conflict. This endeavour itself is pain—a wretched state of mind.

This single problem has different aspects: there are economic, social, political, psychological and even religious problems. Do not they all emanate from that one single problem, *dukkha*, unsatisfactoriness? If there is no unsatisfactoriness, why need we strive to solve our problems? Does not solving a problem imply reducing the



unsatisfactoriness? All problems bring about unsatisfactoriness, and so we endeavour to put an end to them, but they beget one another. The cause is often not external, but in the problem itself; it is subjective in origin. We often think that we have solved problems to the satisfaction of all concerned, but they often crop up again in other forms, in diverse ways. We are constantly confronted with fresh problems, and we put forth fresh efforts to solve them; thus the problems and the solving of them go on incessantly. Such is the nature of suffering, the universal characteristic of sentient existence. Suffering appears and passes away only to reappear in other forms. All forms of suffering are either physical or psychological, and some people are capable of enduring the one more than the other.

The recognition of this universal fact, suffering, however, is not a total denial of pleasure or happiness. The Buddha, the Lord over suffering, never denied happiness in life when he spoke of the universality of suffering. In the *Anguttara Nikāya* (I. 80), one of the original collections of the Pali Canon, there is a long enumeration of the happiness that people are capable of enjoying.

Through his sense faculties man is attracted to sense objects, delights in them, and derives enjoyment from them. This is a fact that cannot be denied, for it is experienced. Neither the delightful objects nor the enjoyment, however, are lasting. They undergo change. A being and the empirical world are both constantly changing. They come into being and pass away. All is in a whirl, nothing escapes this inexorable, unceasing change; and because of this transitory nature, nothing is really pleasant. There is happiness, but it is momentary; it vanishes like a snowflake and brings about unsatisfactoriness. There is no real rest in the cosmos, however much the weary may crave for rest. A relative rest is possible, but not an absolute rest. Happiness there is, but it is a passing delusion. The seeing eye sees its passing with its arising. The desired is not there when the outstretched hand would grasp it, or being there and grasped, it vanishes.

The solution for this problem of *dukkha*, conflict, the unsatisfactoriness of life, is the Noble Eightfold Path put forward by the Buddhas or Enlightened Ones of all ages. This Path, which is Buddhism in practice, is arranged in three groups: virtue, concentration, and wisdom.

The eight factors of the Path are:

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Right Understanding ( <i>sammā-diṭṭhi</i> )  | Wisdom Group   |
| 2. Right Thought ( <i>sammā-sankappa</i> )      | <i>paññā</i>   |
| 3. Right Speech ( <i>sammā-vācā</i> )           |                |
| 4. Right Action ( <i>sammā-kammanta</i> )       | Virtue Group   |
| 5. Right Livelihood ( <i>sammā-ājīva</i> )      | <i>sīla</i>    |
| 6. Right Effort ( <i>sammā-vāyāma</i> )         | Concentration  |
| 7. Right Mindfulness ( <i>sammā-sati</i> )      | Group          |
| 8. Right Concentration ( <i>sammā-samādhi</i> ) | <i>samādhi</i> |

The Buddha, the founder of this Path, the Path unique to Buddhism and distinguished from every other religion and philosophy, calls it the Middle Path as it avoids two extremes: self-indulgence and self-mortification.<sup>4</sup> It must always be borne in mind that the term "Path," is only a figurative expression. Though conventionally we talk of treading a path, in the ultimate sense the eight steps signify eight mental factors. They are interdependent and interrelated, and at the highest level function simultaneously; they are not followed and practised one after the other in numerical order. Even on the lower level each and every factor should be tinged with some degree of right understanding, for that is the key-note of Buddhism. Right Understanding comes first and heads the factors of the path.

### Threefold Training

The path of virtue, concentration (meditation) and wisdom is referred to in the discourses as the threefold training (*tividhā-sikkhā*). These three go together supporting each other. Virtue or regulated behaviour strengthens meditation, and meditation in turn promotes wisdom. Wisdom helps one to get rid of the clouded view of the things to see life as it really is, that is to see life and all things pertaining to life as arising and ceasing.

"Concentration (meditation), O monks, supported by virtue brings much fruit, brings much advantage. Wisdom supported by concentration brings much fruit, brings much advantage. The mind supported by wisdom (right understanding) is wholly and entirely freed from the intoxication of sense desires, from becoming, wrong views and ignorance" (*kāma, bhava, diṭṭhi, avijjā*).<sup>5</sup>



Let us now take the first of the three trainings virtue (*sīla*). The moral code taught in Buddhism is vast and varied, yet the function of Buddhist morality is one and not many: the control of man's verbal and physical actions; in other words, purity of speech and action. All morals set forth in Buddhism lead to this end—virtuous behaviour. Virtue, however, is not an end in itself, but a means to *samādhi*, concentration, or meditation. *Samādhi* in turn is a means to *paññā*, true wisdom, which leads to deliverance of mind (*ceto vimutti*), the final goal of the teaching. Taken together virtue, concentration and wisdom bring a harmonious development of a person's emotions and intellect. It is to this end that the Master directs his disciples.

## Right Speech

Three factors of the Noble Eightfold Path form the Buddhist code of conduct (*sīla*). They are: right speech, right action, and right means of livelihood. Right speech (*sammā-vācā*) is (a) to abstain from falsehood and to always speak the truth; (b) to abstain from tale-bearing which brings about discord and disharmony, and to speak words conducive to concord and harmony; (c) to abstain from harsh and abusive speech, and instead to speak kind and refined words; and (d) to abstain from idle chatter, vain talk or gossip, and instead to speak words which are meaningful and blameless.

Speech is a wonderful thing; for just a word can change a person's whole outlook towards good and evil. We are really fortunate in this gift which is denied to animals. Yet how few of us use it for our own and others' welfare. Much trouble and misunderstanding could be avoided if only people would be more thoughtful and gentle in what they say, and more accurate and sincere in what they write.

Speech is a gift of great value since through it we can share our thoughts and ideas with others. But if the tongue, which is pliable, is allowed to become unruly, it can play havoc. Is it not responsible for much strife and trouble arising from squabbles between families, and for wars between nations? If man could but tame his tongue, would not the world be a far better place to live in?

Speech should not be dominated by unwholesome thoughts such as greed, anger, jealousy, pride, or selfishness. Much talk certainly

prevents calmness and right thinking, and a glib tongue leads to all four types of wrong talk. Says the Buddha: "Monks, there are five disadvantages and dangers in garrulous speech: the glib talker utters falsehood, slanders, speaks harsh and idle words, and after death is reborn in an evil state of existence."<sup>6</sup>

(i) The first virtue of right speech is to abstain from falsehood and speak the truth. A truthful person is sincere, upright and dependable. He does not stray from the truth to win fame, or to please another.

(ii) Slander or tale-bearing is the next evil that the tongue can commit. The Pali word means literally "breaking up of fellowship." To slander another is most wicked for it entails making a false statement intended to damage someone's reputation. The slandered often commits two crimes simultaneously. He says what is false because his report is untrue, and then he back-bites.

In Sanskrit poetry the back-biter is compared to a mosquito, small but noxious. It comes singing, settles on you, draws blood, and may give you malaria. Again the tale-bearer's words may be sweet as honey, but his mind is full of poison. Let us then avoid tale-bearing and slander which destroy friendships. Instead of causing trouble let us speak words that make for peace and reconciliation.<sup>7</sup> Instead of sowing the seed of dissension let us bring peace and friendship to those living in discord and enmity. "Be united, wrangle not" (*samaggā hotha māvivadatha*)" said the Buddha. "Concord, indeed, is commendable" (*samavāyo eva sādhu*) was inscribed on stone by Asoka, the Indian king. Since we depend on one another, we must learn to live together in peace, friendship and harmony.

(iii) The next virtue is to abstain from harsh words and be pleasant and courteous. What we say can bring gain or loss, good repute or ill, praise or blame, joy or sorrow.

A gentle word can melt the hardest heart, while a harsh word can cause untold agony. We should, therefore, think twice before we speak ill of anyone, for it is an attempt to damage his character, his good name.

Man's speech often indicates his character. A harsh word, an unpleasant gesture, a crooked smile, may turn a good-natured man



into a criminal, a friend into a foe. Pleasant and courteous speech attracts, and is an asset to society; yet how often is beauty marred by rude talk. "The language of the heart, the language that comes from the heart, is always simple, graceful and full of power."

(iv) The fourth and last virtue concerned with right speech is to abstain from frivolous talk or gossip which brings no profit to anyone, anywhere. People are too fond of idle talk, of maliciously disparaging others. The newspapers in their gossip columns are just as bad. Men and women with time on their hands indulge in endless chatter, amusing themselves at the expense of others. As J. L. Hollard says: "Gossip is always a personal confession either of malice or imbecility. It is a low, frivolous and too often a dirty business in which neighbours are made enemies for life."

The Buddha was very critical of idle chatter, scandal and rumour, for they disturb serenity and concentration. "Better than a thousand sentences—a mere jumble of meaningless words—is one sensible phrase on hearing which, one is pacified."<sup>8</sup>

A sage is sometimes called by the Pali word *muni* which means one who keeps silent. Yes, "silence is golden" so do not speak unless you are sure you can improve on silence.

## **Right Action**

Right action is the second member of the morality group. It involves abstinence from three wrong actions: killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. In place of these wrongs it inculcates compassion towards all living beings; the taking only of things that are given; and living a pure life—of marital fidelity for lay persons, of celibacy for monks and nuns. These are the first three of the five basic precepts (*pancasīla*) of Buddhist ethics, the other two being abstinence from lying and intoxicants. These training precepts, while moulding the character of the individual who observes them, promote harmony and right relations with oneself and others. By such moral conduct one gives others fearlessness, security and peace. All morality, or the good life, is founded on love and compassion (*mettā* and *karuṇā*). A person without these two salient qualities cannot really be called a man of morals. Verbal and physical acts not tinged with love and compassion

cannot be regarded as good and wholesome. Surely one cannot kill or steal with thoughts of love and a good conscience, but only when driven by cruelty, greed and ignorance.

It is necessary to cultivate a certain measure of mental discipline for the untamed mind always finds excuses to commit evil in word or deed. "When thought is unguarded, bodily action is also unguarded; so are speech and mental action."<sup>9</sup>

Conduct builds character. No one can bestow the gift of a good character on another. Each one has to build it up by thought, reflection, care, effort, mindfulness, and concentrated activity. Just as in the mastery of an art, one has to labour hard. So to master the art of noble conduct on which a good and strong character depends, one must be diligent. As William Hawes says: "A good character is, in all cases, the fruit of personal exertion. It is not inherited from parents, it is not created by external advantages, it is no necessary appendage of birth, wealth, talents or station; but it is the result of one's own endeavours."<sup>10</sup> If we would acquire a sterling character, we ought to remember the Buddha's words of warning against negligence: "Be vigilant, be ever mindful" (*appamattā satimanto*).

In the training of character the first thing necessary is to practise restraint (*samyama*). Restraint comes through reflection on virtue and its advantages. The young especially should develop a love of virtue, for it nourishes mental life. An unrestrained mind dissipates itself in frivolous activity. Character is something we have to build up, to forge on the anvil of our resolution.

The training precepts—abstinence from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and liquor—are in no sense commandments. The Buddha was no arbitrary law-giver. There is no coercion or compulsion in Buddhism. The acceptance of the precepts by laymen or monks is voluntary.

Right action—*sammā-kammanta* is no other than *sammā-kamma*. The doctrine of kamma is one of the principal tenets of Buddhism. Kamma is our own volitional actions. If one understands that volitional actions bring their own due results (*kamma-vipāka*), one will not be tempted to evil actions, recognizing that these actions only rebound upon oneself and bring pain and suffering.



## Right Livelihood

The third and the last member of the morality group is right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), which entails abstinence from dealing in arms and lethal weapons, animals for slaughter, human beings, intoxicating drinks, and poison. Though the Buddha mentioned only these five, we must bear in mind that he was addressing the Indian society of the sixth century B.C., which consisted, for the most part, of farmers, herdsman, and traders. Today we could add many other wrong ways of earning a living.

"In this modern world right livelihood can be one of the most difficult rules to obey. So many kinds of work are harmful to society and are unworthy of a true Buddhist. There are the arms and nuclear warfare industries; the drink trade; occupation involving the slaughter or vivisection of animals; yellow journalism; dishonest advertising and publicity; and business that includes usury. Buddhism is not a narrow minded religion. It regards human frailties with understanding and sympathy. Yet the sincere Buddhist cannot profess one code of morality and earn his livelihood in an occupation with another, debased code."<sup>11</sup>

## Duties of the State

We must not think that the Buddha spoke only to the common people on the need for right livelihood. In the Pali Canon, notably in the Dīgha and Anguttara Nikāyas, we find sermons on the duties of a ruler or administrator. It is stated categorically that the king should rule righteously (*dhammena*) and not unrighteously (*a-dhammena*). Besides keeping the same precepts as their subjects, the rulers were expected to possess all the wholesome qualities that go to make a good head of state. The ruler should first be established in Dhamma, in piety and righteousness, avoiding the vices, and then enjoin his subjects to do the same.

Never resting on his laurels, the king or ruler is expected to be kind and dutiful to his subjects "like a benevolent father to his children."<sup>12</sup> The king given to self-indulgence and intoxicated with the thought of authority (*issariyamadamatta*), is not praised, but looked down upon.<sup>13</sup> In order to be just, honest and upright to all,

without partiality or favouritism, the ruler is expected to avoid the four wrong ways of treating people, that is, with desire (*chanda*), anger (*dosa*), fear (*bhaya*), and delusion (*moha*).<sup>14</sup> In this democratic age, these standards of conduct might be transferred from the ruler to the man of state—the elected and appointed officials charged with the governing of a nation.

The precept about right livelihood was designed to bring true happiness to the individual and society, and to promote unity and proper relations among people. Unjust and wrong ways of living apply to individuals, families and nations. A wrong and unrighteous way of life brings in its train widespread unhappiness, disharmony and trouble. When a person or a community succumbs to the evil of exploiting others, it interferes with the peace and harmony of the social order. It is sheer selfishness and greed that prompts a man to adopt wrong and unlawful ways of life. Such folk are utterly indifferent to the loss and pain caused to their neighbours and to society.

### Right Effort

Virtue is the first stage in the Path to Deliverance. The next stage is mental culture or concentration (*samādhi*) which includes three other factors of the Noble Eightfold Path: right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

Right effort (*sammā-vāyama*) is the persevering endeavour (a) to prevent the arising of evil and unwholesome thoughts that have not yet arisen, (b) to discard such evil thoughts already arisen, (c) to produce and develop wholesome thoughts not yet arisen, and (d) to promote and maintain the good thoughts already present.

Therefore the function of this sixth factor is to maintain vigilance in checking unhealthy thoughts, and to cultivate, promote, and maintain wholesome and pure thoughts. The man who has mastered his speech and his physical actions through virtue (*sīla*), now makes the endeavour to scrutinize his thoughts and the concomitant mental factors.

The Buddha has been emphatic about this sixth factor of the path, right effort, because it was not in his power to save people. Though he



was ever ready to guide others on the upward path, to encourage them and give them moral support, he was no saviour, and gave no guarantee that he would save people from suffering, from the shackles of *samsāra*. The idea that someone can raise another from lower to higher levels and ultimately rescue him tends to make a man weak, supine and foolish. It degrades him and smothers every spark of his dignity.

The Buddha's emphasis on right effort shows that Buddhism is not a pessimistic teaching for the feeble-minded, but the religion of a true spiritual warrior, one who is prepared to work out his own deliverance. Since even worldly progress, gain and profit, depend largely on our own efforts, we should strive even harder to train our minds, and so develop the best that is in us. As mental training requires the greatest effort, strive on now. "Do not let your days pass away like the shadow of a cloud which leaves behind it no trace for remembrance." (Read also p.278.)

## Right Mindfulness

Right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), the next path factor, is the application or arousing of awareness in regard to (a) the activities of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), (b) feelings or sensations (*vedanānupassanā*), (c) states of mind (*cittānupassanā*), and (d) mental objects (*dhammānupassanā*). The well-known discourse on "The Setting Forth of Mindfulness" (*satipatthāna-sutta*) deals comprehensively with this fourfold mindfulness.

As the factors of the path are interdependent, right mindfulness aids right effort. Together they work to check the arising of unwholesome thoughts and to develop the wholesome thoughts already entertained. The man vigilant in regard to his actions, verbal, physical, and mental, avoids all that is detrimental to his spiritual progress. Such a one cannot be mentally indolent and supine.

Mindfulness, complete awareness, and clear comprehension, these are the ways with which one brings meditation to fulfilment. He who is mindful at all times is already at the gates of the Deathless. It is significant that the Buddha emphasizes the importance of mindfulness in his final admonition to his disciples: "Subject to change are all

component things. Strive on with mindfulness" (*vayadhammā samikhārā appamādena sampādettha*, D.16).

Constant mindfulness and vigilance are necessary to avoid ill and do good. Our thoughts and emotions need constant care and watchfulness to direct them to the path of purification. It is through such persevering watchfulness that mental progress is realized.

Much learning is of no advantage to its possessor if he lacks mindfulness. Even learned men cannot see a thing in its proper perspective without this all-important quality of mindfulness. Men of good standing, owing to words spoken thoughtlessly and without due consideration of their consequences, are often subject to severe and justifiable criticism. There is a saying: "The spoken word, the lost opportunity, and the sped arrow can never be recalled."

Meditation is fulfilled by the conjunction of the three basic factors of the path: effort, mindfulness, and concentration. These form the three strands of the rope. Mindfulness, however, is considered the strongest strand, for it plays an important role in the acquisition of both calm and insight (*samatha* and *vipassanā*). Mindfulness is a function of mind, and therefore a mental factor. It is called right mindfulness because it avoids misdirected attention, and prevents the mind from paying attention to things in a false way. Mindfulness guides its possessor on the right path to purity and freedom.

Now this right mindfulness should be applied to each and every act one does. In all his movements the meditator is expected to be mindful. Whether he walks, stands or sits, whether he speaks, keeps silent, eats, drinks or answers the calls of nature—in these and in all other activities he should be mindful and wide awake. "Mindfulness, O monks, I declare, is essential in all things everywhere."

In this context it must be noted that in the Buddhist scriptures the word mindfulness (*sati*) is often used together with another word of equal significance, "clear comprehension" (*sampajañña*), the compound expression *sati-sampajañña* occurs frequently in the discourses. Mindfulness and clear comprehension are mutually co-operative.



As a man going from the open into a dark room gradually discerns the objects in it, so a man when fully awake and mindful comprehends things better and brings their true nature to light. The true nature of things is shrouded by ignorance, but right mindfulness aids insight and right understanding.

The description of each type of mindfulness in the discourse on "The Setting Forth of Mindfulness" (*satipaṭṭhāna*) ends with the words: "He lives independent, clinging to nothing in the world."<sup>15</sup> This is the result aimed at by the meditator, an achievement for the earnest and ever zealous. It is hard to cling to nothing in the world, and our efforts to reach such high levels may not be crowned with immediate success. Yet it is worthwhile striving again and again. Some day, if not in this life, then in another birth, one may reach the summit that all who really strive have reached. "Sow a thought," someone has said, "and you reap a deed. Sow a deed, and you reap a habit. Sow a habit, and you reap a character. Sow a character, and you reap a destiny—for character is destiny."

## Right Concentration

Right concentration, the eighth path factor, is the intensified steadiness of the mind comparable to the unflickering flame of a lamp in a windless place. Concentration (*samādhi*) fixes the mind rightly and causes it to be unmoved and undistributed. The correct practice of concentration maintains the mind in a state of balance. Many mental impediments confront a meditator, but with the support of right effort and right mindfulness, he can dispel them and gain perfect concentration. The perfectly concentrated mind is not distracted by sense objects, for it sees things as they really are.

Meditation in Buddhism is divided into two systems, concentration of mind or calm (*samādhi*, *samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). Of these two, concentration has the function of calming the mind, and for this reason the word *samatha* or *samādhi*, in some contexts, is rendered as calmness, tranquility or quiescence. Calming the mind implies unification or "one-pointedness" of mind, brought about by focussing the mind on one salutary object to the exclusion of all others.

"What is concentration? What are its marks, requisites and development?

"Whatever is unification of mind, this is concentration; the four arousings of mindfulness are the marks of concentration; the four right efforts are the requisites for concentration; whatever is the exercise, the development, the increase of these very things, this is the development of concentration."<sup>16</sup>

This statement clearly indicates that the three factors of the *samādhi* group, namely right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration function together to produce real concentration.

Many people today regard freedom and unrestraint as synonyms. The materialistic trend of modern culture, which is predominantly sensual, leads them to think that the taming of the self (mind) hinders self-development. In the teaching of the Buddha, however, it is quite different. The Buddha declares that the self must be subdued and tamed on right lines if it is really to become well. To guard the mind from actions born of lust, hate and delusion—this is the way to true weal and happiness.

It is only when the mind is controlled and kept to the right road of orderly progress that it becomes useful for its possessor and for society. A disorderly mind is a liability both to its owner and to others. All the havoc wrought in the world is wrought by men who have not learned the way of mind control, balance and poise. Control of the mind is the key to happiness. It is the king of virtues and the force behind all true achievement. It is owing to lack of control that various conflicts arise in man's mind. If a person is to control them, he must learn not to give free rein to his longings and inclinations, and should try to live self-governed, pure and calm.

Calmness is not weakness. A calm attitude at all times shows a man of culture. It is quite wrong to imagine that they alone are strong and powerful who are noisy, garrulous and fussily busy.

"Yes, emptiness is loud, but fullness, calm;

The fool's a half-filled crock; the sage, a lake" (Sn.v,721).

The man who cultivates calmness of mind is rarely upset when confronted with the vicissitudes of life. He tries to see things in their proper perspective, how they come into being and pass away. Free from anxiety and restlessness, he will try to see the fragility of the



fragile. "Quiet minds ... go on, in fortune or misfortune, at their own private pace, like a clock during a thunderstorm" (R.L. Stevenson).

No amount of argument about calming the mind and perfecting life leads us to our desired aim; but each act of genuine renunciation, each attempt to detach ourselves from the objects of craving, leads to calm and clarity.

The path pointed out by the Buddha for inner growth is meditation. All types of meditation discussed in Buddhism lead to mental health, never to sickness, for they all remove the tension that sickens the mind, and cleanse it of its impurities.

Thoughts of real importance can only grow in long periods of quiet. Solitude enables the human mind to gain in strength and power. The greatest creative energy works in silence, but people seem to like noise better than silence. The vast majority are so engrossed in everyday affairs that they overlook the importance of silent contemplation. When we withdraw into silence, we are absolutely alone and free to see ourselves as we really are; we stand face to face with actuality, and then we can learn to overcome our weaknesses and limitations. But we so often busy ourselves like a squirrel in a revolving cage—though very active, it merely turns the cage. The hen on her eggs, though seemingly in-active and lethargic, is doing something useful: she is warming the eggs so the chicks will hatch. We should try to put in at least half an hour every day being busy like the hen on her eggs.

Meditation must be done regularly, at fixed times, for a considerable period. We must not expect quick results, for psychological changes come very slowly. It is through training in quiet contemplation that a quiet mind is achieved—*atta manasā* (one's own mind) is the name for a happy mental outlook resulting from one's own endeavour and achievement. But the miserable mentality of one submerged by thoughts of greed, hate, delusion, pride, jealousy, etc. is *anatta manasā* (another's mind).

## True Wisdom

Thus mastering the mind by concentration, the meditator cultivates true wisdom (*paññā*); which consists of the first two factors, right understanding and right thought, the final stage of the path.

Right thought (*sammā-samkappa*) includes thoughts of renunciation (*nekkhamma samkappa*), of good will (*avyāpāda-samkappa*), and of compassion or non-harm (*avihiṃsā samkappa*). These thoughts are to be cultivated and extended towards all living beings irrespective of race, caste, clan, sex or creed. They must embrace all that breathe, with no compromising limitation. The radiation of such ennobling thoughts is not possible for one who is egocentric and selfish.

If we view things with dispassionate discernment, we will understand that selfish desire, hatred and violence cannot go together with true wisdom. Right understanding or true wisdom is always permeated with right thoughts and is never bereft of them. On the other hand, right thought is the outcome of right understanding. These two comprise the wisdom spoken of in the context of the Noble Eightfold Path. Right thought is the result of seeing things as they really are. Thoughts are all important, for our words and acts have thoughts as their source. It is thoughts that are translated into speech and deed. The good or ill results of our words and actions depend solely on the way we think. Hence the importance of learning to think correctly instead of crookedly and haphazardly.

Let us now try to understand the importance of removing evil thoughts and the method of so doing, which is achieved by the correct practice of renunciation, good will, and compassion. When our mind is obsessed by lust or hate, it is quite impossible for us to see things clearly. But the removal of these impediments does not mean struggling with the baneful thoughts that grip the mind. One must learn to see such thoughts face to face—how they appear, reappear and overpower the mind; one must study their nature. Now if we allow our mind continually to entertain thoughts of lust and hate and do not try to control them, those thoughts are strengthened, and hold sway over the mind. But if we are really bent on removing evil thoughts, we will try gradually to cultivate good thoughts that will counteract the harmful ones. For instance, when we are disturbed by sensuality,



thoughts of renunciation will bring us peace of mind. Similarly, good will and compassion will soothe a mind that cherishes ill will, anger, cruelty and revenge. However, to master our thoughts is no easy task. It needs much determination and effort.

In Buddhism, good will (*avyāpāda*) implies friendship without sensual affection. The popular term for good will among Buddhists is *mettā* (Skt. *maitrī*). No English word conveys its exact meaning. Friendliness, benevolence, universal love, and loving-kindness are the renderings most often given. *Mettā* is the wish for the welfare and happiness of all beings, making no restrictions whatsoever.

Compassion (*avihimsā*) is surely not a weak emotional state of mind. It is a strong and enduring quality. When a person is in distress, it is the truly compassionate man's heart that pulsates, and spurs him to action to rescue the distressed, and this needs strength of mind. Those who hastily declare compassion to be an expression of feebleness because it is tender do not know what they are talking about. According to them persecution must be a sign of strength.

Right understanding (*sammā-ditṭhi*), in the ultimate sense, is the understanding of life as it really is. For this one needs a clear comprehension of the Four Noble Truths. To grasp these truths is to understand the intricacies of nature. "A person who fully understands these truths is truly called 'intuitively wise.'"<sup>17</sup>

Right understanding is of the highest importance, for it guides the remaining seven factors of the path.<sup>18</sup> It ensures right thoughts and co-ordinates ideas. When thoughts and ideas become clear and wholesome, speech and action follow their lead: again, right understanding induces one to give up profitless effort and to cultivate right effort which aids the development of right mindfulness. Right effort and right mindfulness, guided by right understanding, causes the other limbs of the system to move in proper relation.

The careful reader will now be able to understand how the three groups, virtue, concentration and wisdom, function together for one common end, deliverance of the mind (*cetovimutti*). It is through genuine cultivation of one's mind and through control of one's actions, both physical and verbal, that the aspirant attains purity. It is through self-exertion and self-development that one secures freedom. This

indeed is the Dhamma discovered by the Buddha, made use of by him for full enlightenment, and revealed to others.

There have been many problems in the world from time immemorial. Each period has its own problems, and our attitudes to them vary; many solutions have been attempted. The Noble Eightfold Path reduces these problems to one, which the Buddha called *dukkha*. He explained that their cause is *avijjā*, ignorance, and *taṇhā*, selfish desire. Now the question is: has modern man found a solution to these problems, or has he merely aggravated them? Does man now live in a state of security and happiness, or of fear and constant tension? Does he follow a path leading to sanity or to madness?

Let us now see what the Middle Path is. It is composed of eight factors: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. Which factor can we put aside as obsolete and not conducive to man's material or mental progress? Which factor hinders man's development worldly or otherwise? Surely only the muddle-headed can call the Noble Eightfold Path out of date, for though it is ancient, it has a perennial freshness. All the problems of life that assail man can be reduced to just one problem, that of *dukkha*, conflict or unsatisfactoriness. The solution for this problem put forward by the Buddhas or Enlightened Ones of all ages is the teaching of the Noble Eightfold Path. Just as the proof of the pudding is in the eating, so the proof of this solution lies in the practice of it.

The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path is open to all. There is no distinction in Nibbāna. Referring to this path and comparing it to a chariot the Master says:

“And be it woman, be it man for whom  
Such chariot doth wait, by that same car  
Into Nibbana's presence shall they come.”  
*Kindred Sayings*, i, p.45

T.W. Rhys Davids, Founding President of the Pali Text Society of London writes:

“Buddhist or not Buddhist, I have examined every one of the great religious systems of the world, and in none of them found



anything to surpass in beauty and comprehensiveness, the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddha. I am content to shape my life according to that Path."

"Be loving and be pitiful  
And well controlled in virtue's ways,  
Strenuous, bent upon the goal,  
And onward ever bravely press.

That danger doth in dalliance lie,  
That earnestness is sure and safe:  
This when you see, then cultivate  
The Eightfold Path, so shall ye touch (realize)  
So make your own, the Deathless Way."

*Psalms of the Brethren, 979, 980*

## Notes

1. S. i. 13.
2. Iti. I, ii, v.
3. S. i. 40.
4. S. v, 420; Vin. i, 10.
5. D. Sutta No.16.
6. A.iii, 254.
7. M. 27, 38 and *passim*.
8. Dhp. v, 100.
9. A. i, 261.
10. Mark Gilbert, *Wisdom of the Ages* (London: 1948), p.48.
11. John Walters, *Mind Unshaken* (London: Rider & Co., 1961), p.47.
12. D. ii, 178.
13. S. i, 100.
14. A. ii. 17.
15. S. v, 115.
16. M. 44/I. 301.
17. M. 43/I. 292.
18. M. 117/III. 76.

## Reflections on the Buddha-Word

### Free Inquiry

The Buddha directs his disciples to the ways of discrimination and research. To take anything on trust, is not the spirit of Buddhism. We find this dialogue between the Master and his disciples:

“If now, knowing this and preserving this, would you say: ‘We honour our Master and through respect for him we respect what he teaches?’”

“No, Lord.”

“That which you affirm, O disciples, is it not only that which you yourselves have recognized, seen and grasped?”

“Yes, Lord.”

And in conformity with this thoroughly correct attitude of true inquiry, it is said in a Sanskrit Buddhist treatise on logic, *Jñānasāra-samuccaya*, 31:

“As the wise test gold by burning, cutting and rubbing it (on a piece of touchstone), so are you to accept my words after examining them and not merely out of regard for me.”

Once the Kālāmas of Kesaputta approached the Buddha and said: “Sir, certain recluses and brahmins come to Kesaputta. As to their own view, they proclaim and expound it in full; but as to the view of others, they abuse it, revile it, depreciate and cripple it. Moreover, sir, other recluses and brahmins, on coming to Kesaputta, do likewise. When we listen to them, sir, we have doubt and wavering as to which of these worthies is speaking truth and which speaks falsehood.”



Then the Master spoke thus:

"Yes, Kālāmas, right it is to doubt, to question what is doubtful and what is not clear. In a doubtful matter wavering does arise."

"Be not misled by tradition, hearsay or mere logic or inference, or after reflection on and approval of some theory, or out of respect for a recluse. But Kālāmas, when you know for yourselves: These things are unprofitable, blameworthy, are censured by the wise; these things, when performed and undertaken, conduce to loss and sorrow—then indeed reject them Kālāmas."

"Now what do you think Kālāmas? When greed, ill will and delusion arise within a man, do they arise to his profit or to his loss?"

"To his loss, sir."

"Now, Kālāmas, does not this man, being overcome by greed, ill will and delusion, commit evil and mislead another to his loss and sorrow for a long time?"

"He does, sir."

"Well then, Kālāmas, what do you think? Are these things profitable, or unprofitable?"

"Unprofitable, sir."

"Are they blameworthy or not?"

"Blameworthy, sir."

"Are they censured by the intelligent or not?"

"They are censured, sir."

"If performed and undertaken, do they conduce to loss and sorrow or not?"

"They conduce to loss and sorrow, sir."

"So then, Kālāmas, as to my words to you just now: 'Be not misled but when you know for yourselves: These things are unprofitable and conduce to loss and sorrow ... do you reject them,' such was my reason for uttering them."

"Kālāmas, be not ... so misled. But when you know for yourselves: These things are profitable, they are blameless, they are praised by the wise: these things, when performed and undertaken, conduce to profit and happiness—then, Kālāmas, having undertaken them, abide therein."

"Now what do you think, Kālāmas? When freedom from greed, ill will and delusion arises in a man, does it arise to his profit or his loss?"

"To his profit, sir."

"Does not this man, not overcome by greed, ill will, and delusion, refrain from evil and lead another into happiness?"

"He does, sir."

"Well then, Kālāmas, what do you think? Are these things profitable or unprofitable?"

"Profitable, sir."

"Are they blameworthy or not?"

"They are not, sir."

"Are they censured or praised by the wise?"

"They are praised, sir."

"When performed and undertaken, do they conduce to happiness or not?"

"They conduce to happiness, sir."

"So then Kālāmas, as to my words to you just now: 'Be not misled ... but when you know for yourselves: These things are profitable ... and conduce to happiness ... undertake them and abide therein,' such was my reason for saying them" A. i, 188 Sutta 65; cf. A. i, 66 and A. ii, Bhaddiya Sutta 193.

The reader will note that this discourse, Kālāma Sutta, discourages dogmatism and blind faith with a vigorous call for free investigation. Nevertheless he should not hastily conclude that the Buddha was "a pragmatic empiricist who dismisses all doctrine and faith, and whose Dhamma is simply a freethinker's kit to truth which invites



each one to accept and respect whatever he likes." He should read with careful attention the last section of the sutta in which the Buddha emphasizes the importance of the three root causes of all evil: greed, ill will and delusion, and their opposites, the root causes of all good: dispassion, good will and wisdom. "Thus this discourse to the Kālāmas offers an acid test for gaining confidence in the Dhamma as a viable doctrine of deliverance."

For a fuller discussion of this sutta read the very illuminating essay: "A Look at the Kālāma Sutta" by Bhikkhu Bodhi appearing in the Buddhist Publication Society Newsletter, Spring 1988, No.9.

Buddhism is free from compulsion and coercion and does not demand of the follower blind faith. At the very outset the sceptic will be pleased to hear of its call for investigation. Buddhism from beginning to end is open to all those who have eyes to see and minds to understand.

Once when the Buddha was dwelling in a mango grove at Nālandā, Upāli, a fervent follower of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta (Jaina Mahāvīra), as requested by Mahāvīra, approached the Buddha with the sole intention of debating with him and defeating him in argument. The subject was the theory of kamma which both the Buddha and Mahāvīra professed, although their views on it differed. At the end of the very friendly discussion, Upāli, convinced by the argument of the Buddha, agreed with his views, and was ready to become a follower, a lay disciple (*upāsaka*). Nevertheless, cautioning him, the Buddha said: "Of a truth, Upāli, make a thorough investigation. It is good for well-known men like yourself to make a thorough investigation." Upāli, however, became more satisfied and delighted with the Buddha for thus cautioning him, and took refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha (the Order). Though Upāli became a Buddhist by conviction, the Buddha advised him to respect and support his former teachers as he used to (Upāli Sutta, M. 56).

Thus did the Buddha advocate the importance of freedom of thought and speech and tolerance.

Following in the footsteps of the Master, the Buddhist Emperor Asoka, who reigned in India in the third century B.C., declared in his Rock Edict XII:

“One should not honour only one’s own religion and condemn the religions of others, but one should honour others’ religions for this or that reason. So doing, one helps one’s own religion to grow and renders service to the religions of others too. In acting otherwise one digs the grave of one’s own religion and also does harm to other religions. Whosoever honours his own religion and condemns other religions, does so indeed through devotion to his own religion, thinking: ‘I will glorify my own religion.’ But on the contrary, in so doing he injures his own religion more gravely. So concord, indeed, is commendable: Let all listen, and be willing to listen to the doctrines professed by others.”

In Buddhism one is not asked to believe in anything without first knowing what it is. Blind belief is condemned in the analytic teaching (*vibhajjavāda*) of the Buddha. In many ways the absolutely analytico-philosophic nature of the Buddha is made clear.

Except for the Buddha, no teacher has appeared in the world possessed of this quality in all its fullness. He is the supreme analytic philosopher. Here “analytic philosopher” means one who states a thing after resolving it into its various qualities, putting the qualities in proper order, making everything plain. The *Vimati Vinodani*, a scholium to the Vinaya Commentary, says that the analytical philosopher has the character of one who states a thing after going into its details; he does not state things unitarily, that is, regarding all things in the lump, but after dividing up things according to their outstanding features, having made all matters distinct, so that false opinions and doubts vanish and conventional and highest truth (*sammuti paramattha-sacca*) can be understood. In the *Sārattha-dīpani*, also a scholium to the Vinaya Commentary, we find the following: “An upholder of the analytic method is the Master, because he approaches not the extremes of eternalism and nihilism, but teaches the middle way of dependent arising.”

As a skilful anatomist resolves a limb into tissues and tissues into cells, the Buddha analyses all component things into their fundamental elements. Therefore is he called the *Vibhajjavādi*, the Teacher of the Doctrine of Analysis.



The truth of the Dhamma can be grasped only through insight, never through blind faith. One who goes in quest of truth is not satisfied with surface knowledge. Such a one wants to delve deep and see what is beneath. That is the sort of search encouraged in Buddhism. That type of search yields right understanding.

Even as blind belief is contrary to the spirit of the Buddha-word, praying and petitioning to an imaginary external agency is against the Buddhist way of life. The Buddha, the wisest and the purest of beings, in his all comprehensive survey of the universe found that the concept of a supreme deity or ruler is mere illusion. It is fear in man enmeshed in ignorance which creates the idea of an omniscient, omnipotent external agency, and, once that idea is created, men move in awe of the child of their own fear and work untold harm to themselves.

The highest worship is that paid to the best of men, those great and daring spirits who have, with their wide and penetrating grasp of reality, wiped out ignorance, the worst of stains, the crowning corruption of all our madness, and rooted out all passion. The men who saw truth are our true helpers, but Buddhists do not pray to them. Buddhists only revere the revealers of truth for having pointed out the way to happiness. Happiness is what one must achieve for oneself; no one else can make one better or worse.

Man must be left alone to look after himself and his latent powers. Let him learn to stand alone. The thought that another raises him from lower to higher levels and saves him, tends to make man indolent and weak. This kind of thinking degrades a man. "Dependence on an external power has generally meant a surrender of human effort." Thus did the Buddha exhort his followers to acquire self-reliance. None can give us true peace, but only we ourselves; others may help us indirectly, but deliverance from suffering must be wrought out by each one for himself or herself.

Psychology reveals that infinite possibilities are latent in man, and it must be man's endeavour to develop and unfold these possibilities. Each individual should make the exertion necessary for his or her emancipation. None on earth or in heaven can grant deliverance to another who merely begs for it. In one's own hand lies the power to mould one's life.

"Pray not! the darkness will not brighten! Ask  
 Nought from the Silence, for it cannot speak!  
 Vex not your mournful minds with pious pains!  
 Ah! Brothers, Sisters! seek  
 Nought from the helpless gods by gift and hymn!  
 Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruits and cakes;  
 Within yourselves deliverance must be sought,  
 Each man his prison makes."

*Light of Asia*, Sir Edwin Arnold.

"What really moves people to believe in God is not any intellectual argument at all. Most people believe in God because they have been taught from early infancy to do it, and this is the main reason.

"Then I think that the most powerful reason is the wish for safety, a sort of feeling that there is a big brother who will look after you. That plays a very profound part in influencing peoples' desire for a belief in God." Bertrand Russell.

### **Moral Causation**

Religion is something to be approached by reasoning and reflection. If, after a thorough study, a teaching appeals to one's heart and mind, let one adopt its principles in the conduct of life. It is foolish to try to follow a creed when one is dissatisfied with it on reasonable grounds. One must be upright. One must be true to oneself and others. Self-deception leads to mental conflict and unhappiness. None has the right to tamper with the freedom of another in the choice of a religion. Freedom of thought is the birthright of every individual. It is wrong to force one out of the way of life which accords with one's outlook and character, spiritual inclinations and tendencies. Compulsion in every form is bad. It is coercion of the blackest kind to make a man gulp down beliefs for which he has no relish. Such forced feeding cannot be good for anybody, anywhere.

A man must be allowed to grow in that way which will bring out his best. Any regimentation of thought is direct interference with that unfolding of the spirit. A Buddhist considers such interference as intolerance of the worst kind.



Purification comes not from an external agency, and self-purification can only come to one who is free to think out his own problems without let or hindrance. Others may help if one is ready to receive such help or seeks it. The highest happiness is attained only through self-knowledge, self-realization, self-awakening to the truth. One must put forth the appropriate effort and break the shackles that have kept one long in bondage and get at freedom from sorrow by unremitting self-exertion, and not through the mediation of another. Buddhist monks are not priests who perform rites of sacrifice. They do not administer sacraments and pronounce absolution. An ideal bhikkhu cannot and does not stand as an intermediary between humanity and supernatural powers; for Buddhism teaches that each individual, whether layman or monk, is solely responsible for his own liberation. Hence, there is no need to win the favour of a mediating priest.

“By ourselves is evil done,  
By ourselves we pain endure,  
By ourselves we cease from wrong,  
By ourselves we become pure.  
No one saves us but ourselves,  
No one can and no one may;  
We ourselves must walk the Path,  
Buddhas only show the way.”

It was the Buddha, who for the first time in the world's history, taught that deliverance could be attained without a saviour. By precept and example, he was an exponent of the strenuous life. “Work out your deliverance with mindfulness” (*appamādena sampādettha*) are the last words of the Master.

Each living being is his or her own creator; no other creator do we see in the world beyond our own action. By our action we make our character, personality, individuality. We are all self-made. Therefore does the Buddha say that “we are heirs of our own deeds, bearers of our own deeds, our deeds are the womb out of which we spring,” (M. 135) and through our deeds alone we must change for the better, remake ourselves and win liberation from ill. How can it be otherwise? If we, through our ignorance and our passions, in the long night of

samsāric wandering had not shaped ourselves, how could there be such difference and dissimilarity between living beings as we see in the world today?

The teaching of moral causation (*kamma*), which is the one and only reasonable explanation for the mass of suffering called the world, cannot be overthrown. All explanations of sentient existence, excepting moral causation, are fully unsatisfactory, for they do not take into account the real function of the intangible, nevertheless, deciding factor of mentality (*nāma*) in the process of becoming (*bhava*). But when one sees sentient life as the working, principally, of causality in its hidden aspect of conscious process, then one comes to know and grasp the fount of life as ignorance; and the countless forms of sentience as expressions of the drive of many-coloured passion which urges all from life to life, arising and bursting asunder as bubbles in the vast sea of *samsāra*. Then one comes to cognize the meaning of moral causation through the phenomenon of rebecoming, rebirth: we are reaping what we have sown in the past; some of our reapings, we know, we have even sown in this life. In the self same way, our actions here mould our hereafter and thus we begin to understand our position in this mysterious universe. It should, however, be remembered that according to Buddhism, not everything that occurs is due to past action or *kamma*.

Therefore we do not hasten to blame or praise a Deva or a specially graced person for the ills we suffer and the good we experience. No, not even the Buddha could redeem us from *samsāra*'s bond. Each individual should make the exertion necessary for his emancipation. In our own human hands lies the power to mould our lives. Others may lend us a helping hand indirectly, but deliverance from suffering must be wrought out and fashioned by each one for himself upon the anvil of his own actions.

We believe that:

“Whatever a man does, the same he in himself will find;  
The good man good; and evil he that evil has designed;  
And so our deeds are all like seeds, and bring forth fruit in kind.”

We see a reign of natural law, unending cause and effect and naught else ruling the universe. The whole world is subject to the law



of cause and effect. The entire world is governed and controlled by this unending cause and effect, in other words, action and reaction.

### **Inner Culture**

Man is an everchanging process of mind and body and the most important element in this process is the mind. The control of the mind is the heart of the Buddha's teaching. Happiness has to be found and perfection wrought through the mental element in us, our consciousness. But so long as consciousness is soiled, nothing worthy can be achieved there. Hence the Buddha stressed mental purity as the source, essential condition of true happiness and deliverance from suffering. Often did the Master exhort his disciples thus: "Search yourselves," and "Tame your minds" (D. 16).

Exhorted by a single utterance of the Master many a man changed his life entirely. Buddhist books are full of instances where sudden transformations took place after some brief indication like the following:

"Channel-makers lead flood waters,  
Arrow-makers shape the lethal shafts,  
Carpenters bend wood and naught besides.  
Wise men discipline themselves." Dhp.80

The guarding of the self from actions of greed, and training it to the performance of actions freed from greed, that is selfless action, is the way to happiness and true weal in the doctrine of the Buddha.

Two important discourses of the Buddha (D. 25; M.22) clearly tell us why the Buddha teaches the Dhamma, the doctrine. Let us listen to him:

1. The Blessed One is enlightened. He teaches the Dhamma for enlightenment (of others).
2. He is self-controlled. He teaches the Dhamma for control (of others).
3. He is calmed. He teaches the Dhamma for calm (of others).
4. Having crossed over (the *ogha*, the tide of taints), he teaches the Dhamma for the crossing over (of others).

5. Having attained Nibbāna (by quenching the fire of defilements, *parinibbuto*), he teaches the Dhamma for Nibbāna (of others).

The Dhamma, the Buddha's Doctrine, is not for mere appreciation or for mere possessing it as some property. The Buddha has clearly pointed out that the Dhamma is a means for crossing over the ocean of suffering, the ocean of *samsāra* or repeated existence, and for reaching the safe and secure shore of the Deathless Nibbāna. The Dhamma is like a raft to ford across a stretch of water. (See below p. 237.)

It is only when the mind is not allowed to kick over the traces and is kept to the right road of orderly progress that it becomes useful for its individual possessor and for society. A disorderly mind is of the nature of a debit both to its owner and to others. All the havoc in the world is wrought by men who have not learned the way of mind-control and physical balance and poise. Therefore, the Buddha says:

"Whatever a foe to a foe may do—

The wrathful to the wrathful—

The ill-directed heart can do it worse." Dhp.42

Rank, caste, colour, wealth and power cannot make a man a person of value to the world. Only his character makes a man great and worthy of honour. "Character is what comes out when life is lived under stress of purposeful and skilful activity. Just as a diamond is carbon which has been subjected to severe pressure, so life which is lived out under intense and continued spiritual exertion produces the jewel, character." It is character that illumines wisdom (*apadāna sobhinī paññā*).

Man today is the result of millions of repetitions of thoughts and acts. He is not ready-made; he becomes and is still becoming. His character is predetermined by his own choice. The thought, the act which he chooses, that by habit, he becomes.

"Radiant is the mind at birth, and it is soiled only by adventitious defilements (*pabhassaramidaṃ bhikkhave cittam, taṃ ca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkilīṭṭham*)," says the Buddha. And others, basing their ideas on the Buddha-word, say the same thing



in other words: "By nature living beings are gentle, but adventitious ills defile them."

By systematic attention and thought about the things that one meets with in everyday life, by controlling one's evil inclinations and by curbing the impulses, one can keep the mind from being soiled. Hard it is to give up what lures and holds us in thrall; and hard it is to exorcise the evil spirits that haunt the human heart in the shape of unwholesome thoughts. These evils are the manifestations of lust, hate and ignorance—*lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha*, the threefold army of Death (*Māra*). Until one attains to the very crest of purity by constant training of the mind, one cannot defeat these hosts completely. The mere abandoning of outward things, fasting and so forth, do not tend to purify a man, these things do not make a man holy and harmless. Self-mortification is one extreme which the Master in his first proclamation of the Dhamma cast off as wrong, and so also did he reject sensual indulgence, calling it ignoble. Avoiding these two extremes, the Buddha revealed to the world the Middle Way—*Majjhima Paṭipadā*—which leads a person to peace, enlightenment and Nibbāna (*upasamāya*, *sambodhāya* *nibbānāya*).

Spinoza wrote: "The things which commonly happen in life, and are esteemed among men as the highest good, can be reduced to these three, riches, fame and lust, and by these the mind is so distracted that it can scarcely think of any other good."

Man's passions are disturbing. The lust of blinded beings has brought about hatred and all other sufferings. The enemy of the whole world is lust through which all evils come to living beings. This lust, when obstructed by some cause, is transformed into wrath. And man falls into the net which he himself has made of his passion for pleasure, like the spider into its own web. But by training in virtuous conduct, development of calm, and getting at the light of truth, the wise pass on cutting the bonds. The wise consider him who has conquered himself through the uprooting of the passions higher than he who has conquered a thousand thousands in battle.

Refraining from intoxicants and becoming heedful, establishing themselves in patience and purity, the wise train their minds. The calm attitude at all times shows a man of culture. It is not too hard a task for

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(संजीवनी शास्त्र केंद्र)

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a man to be calm when all things round him are favourable. But to be composed of mind in the midst of unfavourable circumstances is hard, and it is this difficult thing that is worth doing; for by such control one builds up strength of character.

Control of self is the key to happiness. It is the king among virtues. It is the force behind all true achievement. The movements of a person void of control are purposeless and unsettled. And such a one indulging in sensuous pleasures is like the greedy woodpecker who comes to dire disease on the coarse wild plantain.

A sage of old has said:

“If one ponders on objects of the sense, there springs  
Attraction; from attraction grows desire;  
Desire flames to fierce passion; passion breeds  
Recklessness; then the memory all betrayed  
Lets noble purpose go, and saps the mind,  
Till purpose, mind and man are all undone.”

It is owing to the lack of control that in our mind arise conflicts of diverse kinds. And if conflicts are to be eliminated, we must give less rein to longings and inclinations and endeavour to live the life self-governed and pure.

“All too often we are so much in bondage to the senses, to material things, we live so exclusively in the material world, that we fail to contact the power within. We should, however, learn to withdraw to the inner realities. By withdrawing into the silence, we can learn to overcome the weaknesses and limitations of ordinary experience. Unless we do this, life lacks meaning, purpose, drive and inspiration.”

No amount of logic and argument on the perfecting of life leads us to our desired goal. No amount of speculation brings us one inch nearer to our aim. But each act of genuine renunciation of, and detachment from, the objects that incite passion, that lead us deeper into the night of ignorance, and enslave us with their lure, takes us goalwards, blisswards, peacewards.

There is nothing vague in the teaching of the Buddha. Knowing evil as evil and good as good, why need one hesitate to avoid the bad



and tread the good path? According to the insight of the Buddhist he can do nothing but cultivate good and avoid ill. For the Buddhists the doing of good is ineluctable, if he has understood their Master's teaching:

*Sabba pāpassa akaranam  
Kusalassa upasampadā  
Sacitta pariyodapanam  
Etam Buddhānasāsanam.*

"To put aside each ill of old,  
To leave no noble deed undone,  
To cleanse the mind—in these behold  
The teaching of the Enlightened One." Dhp. v, 183

Everyone, however, can win the victory, if he chooses. We cannot all be great statesmen, artists or philosophers, but what is more important, at any rate for us, we can all, if we choose, be good men.

Often our attempts to reach perfection are not crowned with success. But failure does not matter so long as we are sincere in our attempts, pure in our motives, and strive again and again without stopping. None reaches the summit of a hill at once. One rises by degrees. Like the skilful smith who blows away the dross in gold bit by bit, man must try to purge his life of its impurities (Dhp. 239). A child learns to stand and walk gradually and with difficulty. So, too, have all great ones, in the march to perfection, moved from stage to stage, through repeated failures to final success.

The path pointed out by the Buddha for inner growth and development is meditation's path. It is the way of careful cultivation of the mind so as to produce the choice fruit of unalloyed happiness, and supreme rest from the turmoil of life. It is the path of constant heedfulness in all our actions. Watchfulness and complete awareness, these bring meditation to fulfilment. Who is mindful and aware of himself at all times is already at the gates of the Deathless—Nibbāna.

## 6

### The Fact of Impermanence

“Impermanent, subject to change, are component things. Strive on with mindfulness!” This was the final admonition of the Buddha Gotama to his disciples.

And when the Buddha had passed away, Sakka, the chief of the deities, uttered the following:

*Aniccā vata sankhārā-uppāda vaya dhammino  
Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti-tesam vūpasamo sukho.*  
Mahāparinibbāna Sutta<sup>1</sup>

“Impermanent are all component things,  
They arise and cease, that is their nature;  
They come into being and pass away,  
Release from them is bliss supreme.”

Even up to present times, at every Buddhist funeral in Theravāda countries, this very Pali verse is recited by the Buddhist monks who perform the obsequies, thus reminding the congregation of the evanescent nature of life.

It is a common sight in Buddhist lands to see the devotees offer flowers and light oil lamps before a Buddha image. They are not praying to the Buddha or to any “supernatural being.” The flowers that fade and the flames that die down speak to them of the impermanency of all conditioned things.

It is this single and simple word “impermanence” (*anicca*) which is the very core of the Buddha’s teaching, being also the basis for the other two characteristics of existence, suffering (*dukkha*) and no-self (*anattā*). The fact of impermanence means that reality is never static but is dynamic throughout, and this even modern scientists are realizing to be the basic nature of the world without any exception.



In his teaching of dynamic reality, the Buddha gave us the master key to open any door we wish. The modern world is using the same master key, but only for material achievements, and is opening door after door with amazing success.

Change or impermanence is the essential characteristic of all phenomenal existence. We cannot say of anything, animate or inanimate, organic or inorganic, "this is lasting," for even while we are saying this, it will be undergoing change. All is fleeting: the flower's beauty, the bird's melody, the bee's hum, and a sunset's glory.

"Suppose yourself gazing on a gorgeous sunset. The whole western heavens are glowing with roseate hues; but you are aware that within half an hour all these glorious tints will have faded away before your eyes, although your eyes cannot place before you the conclusion which your reason draws. And what conclusion is that? That conclusion is that you never, even for the shortest time that can be named or conceived, see any abiding colour, any colour which truly is. Within the millionth part of a second the whole glory of the painted heavens has undergone an incalculable series of mutations. One shade is supplanted by another with a rapidity which sets all measurements at defiance, but because the process is one to which no measurements apply ... reason refuses to lay an arrestment on any period of the passing scene, or to declare that it is, because in the very act of being it is not; it has given place to something else. It is a series of fleeting colours, no one of which is, because each of them continually vanishes in another."<sup>2</sup>

All component things, that is all things which arise as the effect of causes, and which in turn give rise to effects, can be crystallized in the single word *anicca*, impermanence. All tones, therefore, are just variations struck on the chord which is made up of impermanence, suffering (unsatisfactoriness), and no-self or soul: *anicca, dukkha* and *anattā*.

Camouflaged, these three characteristics of life prevail in this world until a supremely Enlightened One reveals their true nature. It is to proclaim these three characteristics, and how, through complete realization of them, one attains to deliverance of mind—that a Buddha appears. This is the quintessence, the sum total of the Buddha's teaching.

Although the concept of *anicca* applies to all compounded and conditioned things, the Buddha is more concerned with the so-called being, for the problem is with man and not with dead things. Like an anatomist who resolves a limb into tissues and tissues into cells, the Buddha, the Analyser (*vibhajjavādi*), analysed the so-called being, "the *sankhāra puñja*," the heap of processes, into five ever-changing aggregates, and made it clear that there is nothing abiding, nothing eternally conserved, in this conflux of aggregates (*khandha santati*). They are: material form or body, feeling or sensation, perception, mental formations, consciousness.

The Enlightened One explains: "The five aggregates, monks, are *anicca*, impermanent; whatever is impermanent, that is *dukkha*, unsatisfactory; whatever is *dukkha*, that is without *atta*, self. What is without self, that is not mine, that I am not, that is not my self. Thus should it be seen by perfect wisdom (*sammappaññāya*) as it really is. Who sees by perfect wisdom, as it really is, his mind, not grasping, is detached from taints, he is liberated."<sup>3</sup>

Nagarjuna only echoes the words of the Buddha when he says: "When the notion of Ātman, Self or Soul ceases, the notion of 'mine' also ceases and one becomes free from the idea of I and mine."<sup>4</sup>

The Buddha gives five very striking similes to illustrate the ephemeral nature of the five aggregates. He compares material form to a lump of foam, feeling to a bubble, perception to a mirage, mental formations to a plantain trunk (which is pithless, without heartwood), and consciousness to an illusion, and asks: "What essence, monks, could there be in a lump of foam, in a bubble, in a mirage, in a plantain trunk, in an illusion?"

Continuing, the Buddha says: "Whatever material form there be: whether past, future or present; internal or external; gross or subtle; low or lofty; far or near, that material form the monk sees, meditates upon, examining with systematic attention, he, thus seeing, meditating upon, and examining with systematic attention, would find it empty, he would find it unsubstantial and without essence. What essence monks, could there be in material form?"



The Buddha speaks in the same manner of the remaining aggregates and asks: "What essence, monks, could there be in feeling, in perception, in mental formations and in consciousness?"<sup>5</sup>

Thus we see that a more advanced range of thought comes with the analysis of the five aggregates. It is at this stage that right understanding known as insight (*vipassanā*) begins to work. It is through this insight that the true nature of the aggregates is grasped and seen in the light of the three characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*), namely: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and no-self.

It is not only the five aggregates that are impermanent, unsatisfactory and without self, but the causes and conditions that produce the aggregates are also impermanent, unsatisfactory and without self. This point the Buddha makes very clear:

"Material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness, monks, are impermanent (*anicca*). Whatever causes and conditions there are for the arising of these aggregates, they, too, are impermanent. How, monks, could aggregates arisen from what is impermanent, be permanent?

"Material form ... and consciousness, monks, are unsatisfactory (*dukkha*). Whatever causes and conditions there are for the arising of these aggregates, they too are unsatisfactory. How, monks, could aggregates arisen from what is unsatisfactory be pleasant or pleasurable?

"Material form ... and consciousness, monks, are without a self (*anattā*). Whatever causes and conditions there are for the arising of these aggregates, they, too are without self. How, monks, could aggregates arise from what is without self, be self (*atta*)?

"The instructed noble disciple (*sutavā ariyasāvako*), monks, seeing thus becomes dispassionate towards material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. Through dispassion he is detached, through detachment he is liberated; in liberation the knowledge comes to be that he is liberated, and he understands: Destroyed is birth, lived is the life of purity, done is what was to be done, there is no more of this to come (meaning that there is no more continuity of the aggregates, that is, no more becoming or rebirth)."<sup>6</sup>

It is always when we fail to see the true nature of things that our views become clouded. Because of our preconceived notions, our greed and aversion, our likes and dislikes, we fail to see the sense organs and sense objects in their respective and objective natures. (*āyatanānaṃ āyatanatṭam*), and go after mirages and deceptions. The sense organs delude and mislead us and then we fail to see things in their true light, so that our way of seeing things becomes perverted (*viparīta dassana*).

The Buddha speaks of three kinds of illusions or perversions (*vipallāsa*, Skt. *viparyāsa*) that grip man's mind, namely: the illusion of perception, thought, and view (*saññā vipallāsa; citt-v; diṭṭhi-v*).<sup>7</sup> Now when a man is caught up in these illusions he perceives, thinks, and views incorrectly.

He perceives permanence in the impermanent; satisfactoriness in the unsatisfactory (ease and happiness in suffering); self in what is not self (a soul in the soulless); beauty in the repulsive.

He thinks, he views in the same erroneous manner. Thus each illusion works in four ways, and leads man astray, clouds his vision, and confuses him. This is due to unwise reflection, to unsystematic attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). Right understanding (or insight meditation—*vipassanā*) alone removes these illusions and helps man to cognize the real nature that underlies all appearance. It is only when man comes out of this cloud of illusion and perversion that he shines with true wisdom like the full moon that emerges brilliant from behind a black cloud.

The aggregates of mind and body, being ever subject to cause and effect as we saw above, pass through the inconceivably rapid moments of arising, presently existing and ceasing (*uppāda, tṛiti, bhāṅga*), just as the unending waves of the sea or as a river in flood sweeps to a climax and subsides. Indeed, human life is compared to a mountain stream that flows and rushes on, changing incessantly like a flowing stream (*nadī sotoviya*).<sup>8</sup>

It should now be clear that the being whom for all practical purposes we call a man, woman or individual, is not something static, but kinetic, being in a state of constant and continuous change. Now when a person views life and all that pertains to life in this light, and



understands analytically this so-called being as a mere succession of mental and bodily aggregates, he sees things as they really are (*yathābhūtaṃ*). He does not hold the wrong view of personality belief, belief in a soul or self (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*), because he knows through right understanding that all phenomenal existence is causally dependent (*paṭicca-samuppanna*), that each is conditioned by something else, and that its existence is relative to that condition. He knows that as a result there is no "I," no persisting psychic entity, no ego principle, no self or anything pertaining to a self in this life process. He is, therefore, free from the notion of a microcosmic soul (*jīvātma*) or a macrocosmic soul (*paramātma*) or even a cosmic soul.

It is said that through insight meditation (*vipassanā*) one sees things as they really are (*yathābhūtaṃ*) and not as they appear to be. Viewing things as they really are implies, as we discussed above, seeing the impermanent, unsatisfactory and no-self nature of all conditioned and component things. To such a meditative disciple of the Buddha the "world" is not the external or the empirical world, but the human body with its consciousness. It is the world of the five aggregates of clinging (*pañca-upādānakkhandā*). It is this that he tries to understand as impermanent, unsatisfactory and without self or soul. It is to this world of body and mind that the Buddha referred to when he said to to Mogharāja: "Ever mindful, Mogharāja, see the world as void (*suñña*)—having given up the notion of a self (underlying it)—so may one overcome death (*māra*). The King of Death sees not one who thus knows the world."<sup>9</sup>

The sum total of the philosophy of change taught in Buddhism is that all component things that have conditioned existence are a process and not a group of abiding entities, but the changes occur in such rapid succession that people regard mind and body as static entities. They do not see their arising and their breaking up (*udaya-vaya*), but regard them unitarily, see them as a lump or whole (*ghana saññā*).

It is very hard, indeed, for people who are accustomed to continually think of their own mind and body and the external world with mental projections as wholes, as inseparable units, to get rid of the false appearance of "wholeness." So long as man fails to see things

as processess, as movements, he will never understand the *anattā* (no-soul) doctrine of the Buddha. That is why people impertinently and impatiently ask the question: If there is no persisting entity, no unchanging principle, like self or soul, what is it that experiences the results of deeds here and hereafter?

Two different discourses deal with this burning question.<sup>10</sup> The Buddha was explaining in detail to his disciples the impermanent nature of the five aggregates, how they are devoid of self, and how the latent conceits "I am" and "mine" cease to exist, and then there arose a thought in the mind of a certain monk thus: "Material body is not self, feeling is not self, perception is not self, mental formations are not self, consciousness is not self. Then what self do selfless deeds affect?"

The Buddha, reading the thought of the monk's mind, said: "The question was beside the point," and made the monk understand the impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self nature of the aggregates.

"It is wrong to say that the doer of the deed is the same as the one who experiences its results. It is equally wrong to say that the doer of the deed and the one who experiences its results are two different persons"<sup>11</sup> for the simple reason that what we call life is a flow of psychic and physical processes or energies arising and ceasing constantly, and it is not possible to say that the doer himself experiences results because he is changing now, every moment of his life; but at the same time we must not forget the fact that the continuity of life that is the continuance of experience, the procession of events is not lost; it continues without a gap. The child is not the same as an adolescent, the adolescent is not the same as the adult, they are neither the same nor totally different persons (*na ca so na ca añño*).<sup>12</sup> There is only a flow of bodily and mental processes.

There are three types of teachers: the first one teaches that the ego or the self is real now as well as in the future (here and hereafter); the second one teaches that the ego is real only in this life, not in the future; the third one teaches that the concept of an ego is an illusion—is not real either in this life or in the hereafter.

The first one is the Eternalist (*sassatavādi*); the second one is the Annihilationist (*ucchedavādi*), the third one is the Buddha who



teaches the middle way avoiding the extremes of eternalism and annihilationism. (Here the middle way is the doctrine of dependent arising, or causal conditioning—*paṭicca-samuppāda*.)

All theistic religions teach that the ego survives after death in some way or other, and is not annihilated. The materialist's concept is that the ego is annihilated at death. The Buddhist view is that there is no ego, or anything substantial, or lasting, but all things conditioned are subject to change, and they change not remaining the same for two consecutive moments, and that there is a continuity but no identity.

So long as man cherishes the idea of a lasting self or ego, it will not be possible for him to conceive the idea that all things are impermanent, that there is, in reality, an arising and a ceasing of things (*samudayadhamma, vayadhamma*).<sup>13</sup> The understanding of the *anattā* doctrine, which is exclusively Buddhist, is indispensable in the understanding of the Four Noble Truths and the other principal tenets of Buddhism.

The people of the world today mark the changing nature of life. Although they see it, they do not keep it in mind and act with dispassionate discernment. Though change again and again speaks to them and makes them unhappy, they pursue their mad career of whirling round the wheel of existence and are twisted and torn between the spokes of agony. They cherish the belief that it is possible to discover a way of happiness in this very change, to find a centre of security in this circle of impermanence. They imagine that although the world is uncertain, they can make it certain and give it a solid basis, and so the unrelenting struggle for worldly improvement goes on with persevering effort and futile enthusiasm.

History has proved again and again and will continue to prove that nothing in this world is lasting. All things when clung to fail. Nations and civilizations rise, flourish and die away as waves upon the ocean, yielding place to the new, and thus the scrolls of time record the passing pageant, the baseless vision, and the fading flow that is human history.

**Notes:**

1. In the Mahā-Sudassana Sutta (Dīgha-Nikāya), this verse is ascribed to the Buddha himself; in the Mahā Sudassana Jataka (No.95), it is ascribed to the Bodhisatta in his rebirth as King Mahā Sudassana. In the Theragāthā (v.1159), Mahā Moggallāna Arahat recites it, after mentioning (in v. 1158) the passing away of Sāriputta Arahat that preceded his own by only two weeks.
2. *Ferrier's Lectures and Remains*, Vol. i, p. 119, quoted in *Sarvadarsana Saṁgraha*, E.B. Cowell and A.E. Gough London, 1914, p.15.
3. S. iii, 44.
4. *Mādhyamika-kārikā*, xviii, 2.
5. S. iii, 140.
6. S. iii, 23.
7. A. ii, 52. See Anguttara Nikāya, Part I, trans. by Nyanaponika Thera, (Wheel 155/158,) Catukka Nipāta, No.49 (Kandy: BPS) p.86.
8. A. iv, 137.
9. Sn. v, 1119.
10. M. 109; Khandha Samyutta, 82.
11. S. ii, 20.
12. Miln.i,40.
13. Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.



## The Buddhist Doctrine of Rebirth<sup>1</sup>

*(Astonishing Stories of Rebirth and Child Prodigies)*

Was there a life before birth? Will there be a life after death? These are questions to be treated seriously and dispassionately. Questions of such philosophic importance should be considered by every thinking man objectively and without prejudice, uninfluenced by his own personal beliefs. One should not be hasty in either refuting or accepting facts at their face value. Investigation of facts is necessary before arriving at conclusions. There are many extraordinary psychic phenomena taking place before our own eyes which scientists are not in a position to account for or explain. They do not, however, hastily denounce what they cannot explain. Within the conflux of mind and body of man, however, there are unexplored marvels to occupy men of science for many years.

### Points of View

Is there a God? Is soul an existing thing? Is there a past life and life after death? What happens to man when he quits this life, this temporary abode? Where is the location of future life and what is its nature? These, too, are some of the many problems that have baffled the thinker and men of wisdom throughout the ages.

Before making an attempt to give the Buddhist answer to the question: "Is there a life after death?" a very important and fundamental teaching of the Buddha must be clarified, for without a due appreciation of it, the Buddhist concept of life after death is devoid of meaning. The entire teaching of the Buddha is absolutely free from the notion of a permanent Creator-God who rewards and punishes the good and ill deeds of the beings, and a permanent self or indestructible ego entity. The absence of these two is a characteristic feature of Buddhism, Theravāda or Mahāyāna.

Is there a life after death? is not a question of today or yesterday. Religions, both ancient and modern, and philosophical systems other than those that are materialistic, which assert that the individual is nothing and will be annihilated at death, have touched on this crucial question from different angles in various ways. Buddhism supports a chain of existence, repeated existence, *samsāra*, to use the technical term. It is not a one life-after-death theory.

Logically there are four possible points of view that we can adopt with regard to the question of survival or rebirth. We may say: i. that we survive death in the form of discarnate spirits, i.e. a single after-life theory; ii. that we are annihilated with death, i.e. a materialistic theory, which denies a life after death altogether; iii. that we are unable to discover a satisfactory answer to this question or there is no satisfactory answer, i.e. a sceptical or positivist theory; and iv. that we come back to subsequent earth-lives or lives on other planes, i.e. a rebirth theory. The Buddhist texts record several variants of each of these four types of theories.

Materialists of all ages believe that nothing exists apart from matter. They ignore the question of life before birth, and life after death in accordance with their set beliefs. For them even the mind is a product of matter, and they believe that after the dissolution of the physical body the "personality" ceases to exist.

The Buddhist theory of rebirth, or rebecoming (*punabbhava*), has its origin in the Enlightenment of the Buddha and not in any traditional Indian belief. As recorded in the Buddhist texts (*Mahāsaccaka Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya*) it was on the night of his Enlightenment that the Buddha acquired the capacity to know his prior lives. It was when his mind was composed, clear, cleansed and without blemish, free from adventitious defilements, pliant and flexible, steadfast and unperturbed, that he acquired this capacity to recall prior lives.

By exercising the faculty of clairvoyance (*dibbacakkhu*), the Buddha was able to see among other things, the survival of beings in various states of existence, each faring according to his or her *kamma*, or deeds.



It is interesting to observe that recent research in parapsychology has found acceptance of what is called the supernormal. Interest in the subject of extrasensory perception in experimental psychology is slowly gaining ground, and the results obtained seem to be beyond ordinary comprehension.

Cases of children remembering their previous lives have been brought to light not only in Asian countries like Burma, India, Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and other Eastern countries, but in countries of the West too. Dr. Ian Stevenson, M.D., University of Virginia, U.S.A. has brought out the results of his investigations and research in several books, two of which are entitled: *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*, and *Sri Lanka Cases of Reincarnation Type*.

Attention is drawn also to two other books: *Reincarnation—An East-West Anthology* and *Reincarnation in World Thought —A Living Study of Reincarnation in all Ages*, selections from the world's religions, philosophies, sciences, and great thinkers of the past and present, compiled and edited by Joseph Head and S. L. Cranston, Julian Press, Inc., New York, 1961, and 1967.

In ancient Greece philosophers like Empedocles and Pythagoras taught the doctrine of rebirth and Plato made it an important assumption in his philosophy.

### Evidence of Survival

In recent times the discoveries of psychology have proved how, under deep hypnosis, a subject becomes in effect once more the child he was, and relives experiences that had long been buried in the unconscious. Memories of earliest infancy, and in some cases prenatal memories, have been brought to the surface in this way. Some subjects' memories have been traced back to the earliest infancy, and in some cases to former lives. These facts have been verified. Then there are cases of children who spontaneously recall recollections of their past lives without the intervention of hypnosis. Dr. Stevenson in his book, *The Evidence of Survival from Claimed Memories of Former Incarnations* has dealt with several cases of spontaneous recall of past lives. These cases, of which he gives full descriptions, are from various countries such as Cuba, India, France and Sicily. In

part II of this book he analyses the evidence in order to consider whether there are possible explanations for this recall of past lives, such as fraud, racial memory, extra-sensory perception, retrocognition and precognition.

There is also evidence for survival coming from research in the field of spiritualism. Buddhism points out that one could be reborn in a spirit world according to one's kamma—actions. Now how far is the belief in the existence of departed spirits true? Is it a verifiable fact? Some may ask how do we know that there is life after death? Who is the man who has come back from the dead to tell us what the next world is like? Such people are not aware of the scientific research that has been done and the evidence obtained by organizations like the London Psychical Research Society founded in 1882 by a group of Cambridge men.

### The Relentless Law of Change

“Reincarnation,” a word with which the West is more familiar, means the taking on again of a fleshly body (incarnation) by a spiritual entity. “Transmigration” means the passing from one physical body to another of an immortal “soul” and amounts to the same thing. Neither of these two words is suitable to express the Buddhist concept, in which there is no unchanging spiritual entity, no permanent “self” or “soul.” The word “rebirth” is the one in general use among the Buddhist writers. It is the nearest and least objectionable term, but it is not an entirely satisfactory word. However, the word rebirth is not used by Buddhist writers in the sense that there is something permanent that after death takes flesh again. The Pali word used in the Buddhist texts is *punabbhava* which means renewed becoming or renewed existence.

Certain laws or principles should be examined in order to appreciate the doctrine of rebirth or survival. The first fundamental law or principle that should be examined in order to appreciate rebirth is the law of change (*anicca*). It postulates that nothing in this world is permanent or static. In other words, everything is subject to this ceaseless universal law of change. Seeing a river one may think that it is the same, but not a single drop of water which one sees at any point remains where it was a moment ago. Even the person seeing remains



not the same for two consecutive moments. We live in a changing world while we ourselves are all the while changing. This is the relentless law. As the Buddha so clearly points out: "All compounded and conditioned things, animate or inanimate, are impermanent" (*sabbe sankhārā aniccā*).

An important feature of this law of change is that though everything is subject to change, nothing is ever lost or destroyed. Only its form is changed. Thus solids may change into liquids and liquids into gases but none of them is ever completely lost. Matter is an expression of energy and as such it can never be lost or destroyed according to a principle of science, also called a law of conservation of energy.

Another important feature of the law of change is that there is no distinct and separate line of demarcation between one condition or state, and the succeeding condition or state. Each merges into the next. Consider the waves of the ocean with their rise and fall. Each rising wave falls to give rise to another wave which also rises and falls to give to yet another such wave, each wave merging into the next. There is no boundary line between one wave and the next. So it is with all changing conditions in this world. Thus the change is a continuous process, a flux or flow—an idea which is in perfect accord with modern scientific thought.

Two other fundamental laws or principles that should be examined in order to appreciate rebirth are the law of becoming and the law of continuity. While the law of change states that nothing is permanent, but is always changing, the law of becoming states that everything, every moment, is in the process of becoming another thing. The law of becoming is thus a corollary or natural sequence to the law of change. At no point of time is anything not in the process of becoming something else. A ceaseless becoming is the feature of all things. It is the ever present feature underlying all changes.

Dependent on the law of becoming is the law of continuity. Becoming leads to continuity, and therefore, the law of continuity is a corollary, a natural sequence, to the law of becoming. It is because there is continuity that one does not see an exact line of demarcation between one condition or state and the next.

The law of action and reaction is another fundamental law or principle that should be examined in order to understand rebirth. This law postulates that for every action there must be a result or reaction. This principle of a result following from an action applies to every field of action whether that action is caused by nature or by man. It is a universal law and applies to the physical world as well as the mental world. This law is also called the *law of cause and effect*. When this law has reference to the actions of human beings, it is called the *law of kamma*, and it is in this sense that we have to consider here.

If our present birth here is the beginning, and our death is the end of this life, we need not worry or understand the problem of suffering or unsatisfactoriness. A moral order in the universe, the reality of right and wrong, may not be of any significance to us. To enjoy and avoid unsatisfactoriness at any cost may seem to be the sensible thing to do during this brief span of life. This view, however, does not explain the inequality of humanity, and in general man is conscious of a moral causation, hence the need to seek the cause of this ill.

### The Law of Kamma

The Buddhist doctrine of kamma should be distinguished from other non-Buddhist doctrines of *karma* which were taught by non-Buddhist thinkers prior to, during, and even after the time of the Buddha. Kamma is the law of moral causation that shapes the destiny of beings and brings about rebirth.

The word "kamma" in Pali, i.e. the language the Buddha used, and the word "karma" in Sanskrit, etymologically mean, literally "action" or "doing." Not all actions, however, are considered as kamma. The growing of hair and nails and the digestion of food, for instance are actions of a sort, but not kamma. Reflex actions are also not kamma, but activities without moral significance.

As a technical term, the word "kamma" is used in the early Buddhist texts to denote volitional activities (*sankhārā*). These actions may be *kusala*, that is morally good, or *akusala*, that is morally evil, or *avyākata* that is morally neutral. They may be actions which find expression in bodily behaviour (*kāyakamma*), verbal behaviour (*vacīkamma*) and mental (psychological) behaviour (*manokamma*).



In other words, actions may be physical, verbal or mental. And it is our own volitional activities which we call kamma. So the word kamma is used to denote volitional activities which find expression in thought, speech and physical deeds which are good or evil and are liable to give rise to consequences which partly determine the goodness or badness of these acts. Kamma is the action, the result of the action is called *kamma-vipāka*. "Having willed, man acts by deed, word or thought, and they have their due consequences. All living beings have actions (kamma) as their own, their inheritance, their congenital cause, their kinsman, their refuge."<sup>2</sup>

This endless play of kamma and *kamma-vipāka*, action and reaction, cause and effect, seed and fruit, continue in perpetual motion, and this is becoming, a continually changing process of psycho-physical phenomena of existence (*saṃsāra*).

It is now clear that kamma is volition which is will, a force. Having willed, man acts through body, speech and mind, and actions bring about reactions. Craving gives rise to deed, deed produces results, results in turn bring about new desires, new craving. This process of cause and effect, action and reaction is a natural law.

The operations of kamma are characterised by perfect justice since kamma is a strict accountant. Therefore each one gets his or her exact deserts, what one deserves.

Kamma is a law in itself, with no need for a law-giver; an external agency, an unseen power that punishes the ill deeds and rewards the good deeds has no place in Buddhist thought. Man is always changing either for good or evil. This changing is unavoidable and depends entirely on his own will, his own action. This is merely the universal natural law of the conservation of energy extended to the moral domain.

Although it is popularly supposed that the law of kammic action is followed by its results, it should be known that other causative factors also come into play and often it is their combined effect that determines the result. A single cause cannot produce a result much less many results.

According to Buddhism, things are not causeless (*a-hetuka*), nor due to one single cause (*eka-hetuka*). A number of facts operate in conditioning man's experience. Things are causally conditioned (*paṭiccasamuppanna*), and man by his knowledge of himself and nature, could understand, control and master them.

Kammic correlations are not deterministic, not fatalistic. Kamma is one of many factors conditioning the nature of experience and past kamma is extinguishable and modifiable in the context of one's present actions. It need hardly be pointed out that the Buddhist teaching of kamma is not fatalistic. Buddhism, it may be noted, is opposed to all forms of determinism: natural determinism (*sabhāvavāda*), theistic determinism (*issarakaranavāda*) and kammic determinism (*pubbakammavāda*), that is, attributing everything to past kamma or any combination of them.

According to Buddhism, man is conditioned by his biological laws (*bijaniyāma*), by his environment and physical laws (*utu-niyāma*), by psychological laws (*cittaniyāma*) including his kammic heritage (*kamma-niyāma*); he is not determined by any or all of them. He has an element of free will (*attakāra*) or personal endeavour (*purisakāra*) by exercising which, he can change his own nature as well as his environment (by understanding it) for the good of himself as well as others.

### The Cycle of Existence

Not much science is needed to understand how actions produce reactions, how effects follow causes and seeds brings forth fruit, but how this powerful kammic force, these acts of will, bring fruit in another birth after the dissolution of this body, is hard to grasp.

According to Buddhism there is no life after death or life before birth which is independent of kamma or acts of will. Kamma and rebirth go arm in arm, kamma being the corollary or natural sequence of rebirth and vice versa. Here, however, we must understand that the Buddhist doctrine of kamma is not a philosophical doctrine in which human action is not free but determined by motives which are regarded as external forces acting upon the will, or pre-determined by God, or any external agency. There is no eternal survival in heaven or



hell in Buddhist thought. Birth precedes death, and death also precedes birth, so that the pair follow each other in bewildering succession. Still, there is no permanent self or fixed entity that passes from birth to birth. Though man comprises a psycho-physical unit of mind and matter, the "psyche" or the human mind is not a soul or self in the sense of an enduring entity, something ready-made and permanent. Mind is a force, a dynamic continuum capable of storing up memories not only of this life, but also of past lives.

The permanent soul or self spoken of in other religions is designated in Buddhist texts as *atta*, or in Sanskrit as *ātma*. The denial of the soul or self is called *anattā*, in Pali, or *anātma* in Sanskrit. The Buddhist teaching of *anattā*, i.e. absence of self or soul, does not deny the existence of a personality or individuality. Buddhism says that there is no permanent individuality, no unchanging self or soul. Personality or individuality, according to Buddhism, is not an entity, but a process of arising and passing away, a process of nutrition, of combustion, of grasping, but does not correspond to any fixed entity.

In Buddhist thought there is no origination out of nothing. Nothing is causeless. Everything, animate or inanimate, originates through causes; everything is conditioned. However, Buddhism does not speak of a first cause. The first beginning of existence of the life stream of living beings is inconceivable, and as the Buddha says: "This Wheel of Existence, this cycle of continuity, is without a visible end, and the first beginning of beings, a first cause, cannot be known."<sup>3</sup>

When the Buddha stressed that the so called "being" or "individual" is nothing but a combination of physical and mental forces or energies, a change with continuity, did he not antedate modern science and modern psychology by twenty-five centuries?

This psycho-physical organism undergoes incessant change, creates new psycho-physical processes every instant, and thus preserves the potentiality for future organic processes, and leaves no gap between one moment, and the next. We live and die every moment of our lives. It is merely a coming into being and passing away, a rise and fall like the waves of the sea.

This change of continuity, this psycho-physical process which is patent to us in this life, does not cease at death, but continues

incessantly. It is the dyanamic mind-flux that is known as will, thirst, desire or craving (*tanhā*) which constitutes kammic energy. This mighty force, this will to live, keeps life going. According to Buddhism, it is not only human life, but the entire sentient world that is drawn by this tremendous force—this mind with its mental factors, good or ill.

As we have discussed earlier, according to the materialistic teachings, man ceases to exist at death. However, according to Buddhism, the forces and energies do not cease at death; no force is ever lost, it ever undergoes transformation. Energy does not travel from place to place, but can cease to manifest in one place and commence to manifest itself in another place. In man the greatest force is his will to live, to exist, to continue, to become more and more. This force is not lost at death. It manifests, it resets, reforms in new conditions harmonizing with itself. It is the resetting of this vital flux in fresh conditions that is called rebirth, re-becoming or renewed existence.

Kammic process (*kammabhava*) is the energy that out of a present life, conditions a future life in unending sequence. In this process there is nothing that passes away here and takes birth elsewhere, one is neither the same person nor a totally different one (*na ca so na ca añño*). The logical possibility of such a personal identity without a soul is granted by Professor A. J. Ayer of Oxford, a Logical Analyst who says: "I think that it would be open to us to admit the logical possibility of reincarnation merely by laying down the rule that if a person who is physically identified as living at a later time, does have the ostensible memories and character of a person who is physically identified as living at an earlier time, they are to be counted as one person and not two."<sup>4</sup>

### The Stream of Consciousness

There is the last moment of consciousness (*cuti citta*, or *cuti viññāṇa*) belonging to the immediately previous life; immediately next upon the cessation of that consciousness, but conditioned by it, there arises the first moment of consciousness of the present birth which is called a re-linking or rebirth consciousness (*paṭisandhiviññāṇa*). Similarly the last thought-moment in this life



conditions the first thought-moment in the next. In this way consciousness comes into being and passes away yielding place to new consciousness. Thus this perpetual stream of consciousness goes on until existence ceases. Existence in a way is consciousness—the will to live, the will to continue.

According to modern biology, a new human life begins in that miraculous instant when a sperm cell from the father merges with an egg cell or ovum within the mother. This is the moment of birth. Science speaks of only these two physical common factors. Buddhism, however, speaks of a third factor which is purely mental.

According to the Mahātanhāsaṃkhaya Sutta, a discourse by the Buddha, “By the conjunction of three factors does conception take place. If mother and father come together, but it is not the mother’s proper season, and the being to be born (*gandhabba*) does not present itself, a germ of life is not planted. If the parents come together, and it is the mother’s proper season, but the *gandhabba* or the being to be born is not present, then there is no conception. If the mother and father come together, and it is the mother’s proper season, and the being to be born, the *gandhabba*, is also present, then a germ of life is planted there.”<sup>5</sup>

The third factor, *gandhabba*, is simply a term for the rebirth-consciousness (*paṭisandhi viññāṇa*). It may be called the energy potential released from the dying man. But this rebirth consciousness is not a permanent self, a soul or an ego-entity that experiences the fruits of good and evil deeds. Consciousness is also generated by conditions. Apart from conditions, there is no arising of consciousness.

This craving for existence, this will to live, looms large in the mind of man consciously as well as unconsciously. Craving, like any other thought, is an expression of energy, and as such it cannot be lost or destroyed. This powerful and persistent craving, this will to live, is a powerful and persistent expression of energy and cannot die with the dying man. The craving for existence makes him re-exist. The will to live makes him re-live. He then mentally grasps another existence.

Since the craving for existence (*bhavataṇhā*) is the predominant motive underlying well nigh all the activities of man, at the moment of death, it grows so formidable that it mentally adopts a grasping

attitude. As the Buddha himself has said: At the dying moment this predominant craving becomes a grasping force (*upādāna*) that attracts itself to another existence. It is the last thought process that carries with it this grasping force. These are natural laws, nothing mysterious, mysterious only when we do not understand them. The dying individual with his whole being convulsively clinging to life, at the very moment of his death, sends forth kammic energies which like flash of lightning, hit a new mother's womb ready for conception, and fresh life is started.

### **The Case of Twins**

Identical twins have a common heredity and common environment. Yet psychologists have observed that they differ in character and temperament. It is likely, therefore, that this difference is due to a third factor (other than heredity and environment), namely the "carry over" of past skills, and attitudes from prior lives. Geniuses or child prodigies, whose extraordinary accomplishments cannot be accounted for in terms of heredity or environment, would only be special cases of such a carry over of skills from one life to another. (See p. 135 for stories of child prodigies.)

Take the case of the well-known Siamese twins Chang and Eng. Here is a case of identically the same heredity and the same environment. Specialists who have studied their behaviour reported that the two differ widely in temperament, for while Chang was addicted to liquor, Eng was a teetotaler.

These circumstances urge the thinking mind to consider whether there is not some other factor at work besides heredity and environment. It is wrong to expect a highly complex psycho-physical organism like man to arise from the combination of two purely physical factors like the sperm cell and the ovum cell of the parents. It is only the intervention of the third factor, a psychic factor, that can bring about the birth of a child. The combination of two purely physical factors—the parental sperm and ovum cannot provide the opportunity for the formation of an embryo which is a mixture of both mind and matter. A psychic factor must combine with the two physical factors to produce the psycho-physical organism that an embryo is.



### What is It That is Reborn?

We give names, such as birth, death, thought processes and so on, to a stream of consciousness. There are only thought moments. As we have already explained, the last thought moment we call death, and the first thought moment we call birth; thus births and deaths occur in this stream of consciousness, which is only a series of continuing thought moments. There is no stable, enduring entity in human personality.

So long as man is attached to existence through his ignorance, craving and clinging, to him death is not the final end. He will continue his career of whirling around the Wheel of Existence. This is the endless play of action and re-action kept in perpetual motion by kamma concealed by ignorance, propelled by craving or thirst. As kamma or action is of our own making, we have the power to break this endless chain. It is through the eradication of this driving force, this craving, this thirst for existence, this will to live (*bhava taṇhā*), that the cycle of existence (*samsāra*) ceases. This will to live and relive is eradicated, is put an end to, through *vipassanā* or insight meditation preceded by tranquillity or *samādhi*. Through meditation, one sees the end of repeated existence or rebirth and that is reality, or Nibbāna, the goal of Buddhism.

One with an inquiring mind may ask: If there is no transmigrating permanent soul or self or an ego entity to reincarnate, what is it that is reborn? This question assumes that there is already in us something which is capable of travelling or passing over from us at the moment of death. There is further the assumption that this something is stable and unchanging, for it has to persist through life if it is to continue on to the next life.

As already stated, man consists of a mind flux and body flux. This conflux of mind and body every moment is undergoing a change leaving no room whatsoever for anything to remain stable and static in view of the relentless law of change. All is in a state of flux. Something unchanging and stable within the human system is, therefore, unthinkable. With a stream of continuity there is neither absolute identity nor absolute otherness.

What we call life here is the functioning of the five aggregates, namely: material form, feeling, perception, mental formations or dispositions, and consciousness. These constitute the total personality, in other words the functioning of the mind and the body which are only energies or forces. They are never the same for two consecutive moments. The grown up man is neither the former child nor quite a different person; there is only a relationship or continuity. *Today is the tomorrow you spoke of yesterday.* The child who says, "I" exist, becomes a man and continues to say "I" exist with the same confidence, but he is not talking about the same thing when he says "I." Everything that constitutes it has changed, no doubt imperceptibly, and to much lesser extent, psychically, than in others, and the "I" of the man of forty is by no means the "I" of the child of, say, twelve, or of any of the innumerable stages in between.

We have already given a brief answer to the question: If nothing passes from one life to the next, is the reborn individual identical with the individual who had died? Is he the same as the one who died or is he someone else?

It would not be accurate to say that there is no identity whatsoever between the two individuals. At the same time, merely to state that there is identity can lead to a number of misconceptions. "Not the same, yet not another." One may ask: If every death is followed by a birth, the world's population should be constant, but how is it that, the world's population is fast increasing year by year?

Rebirth can take place not only in this world whose population only we can count, but in other world systems of which the Buddhist texts speak. A death does not necessarily mean that the succeeding rebirth is in a human plane. A man dying can be reborn in states that are non-human, in a good state of existence or in an evil state of existence, depending on his kamma, or good and evil actions.

If beings have been born before, why do they not remember their past lives? As already mentioned, it is not an impossibility, but instances of past memory are rare. There is more than one answer to this question. Our memory is not perfect; it is a very restricted one. We do not remember even our birth in this life, yet we have been born. We trace backward, and our memory only goes up to a point. The painful



incident of death, the interval from conception till parturition may tend to suppress or remove all traces of past experiences.

Death itself is an obliterating agent, for it is necessary for each consciousness to begin its renewed course, more or less a *tabula rasa* with the formation of a new physical brain. Another feature is the nature of the lives intermediate to one human birth and another. There are, as Buddhism maintains, rebirths in states that are non-human and in which the consciousness does not register impressions clearly, so that a series of such lives between one human birth and another may erase all traces of memory connection between them. A study of the earliest behaviour pattern of children, however, will furnish much evidence to suggest that they bring with them into the new life certain dim awarenesses that do not belong to their present range of experience. The aptitude certain children show for acquiring some particular skills strongly suggests remembering rather than learning.

There have been cases where children have recalled their talents of a past life. How do we account for child prodigies in music, mathematics, letters and so forth? (See p. 135.)

### The Journey's End

Man has always found it difficult to believe that his life comes to an end with the dissolution of the physical body. The question: Do we live on after death? has always been prominent in human speculation, for it links up with every fundamental problem of man's being and purpose on this earth.

Is there no end to this repeated existence? The Buddha points out the way:

"O monks, it is through not understanding, not penetrating four things (*dhamma*) that we have run so long, wandered on so long in this round of existence both you and I. And what four? Virtue, concentration, wisdom and deliverance. But when these four things, O monks, are understood and penetrated, rooted out is the craving for existence, destroyed is that which leads to renewed becoming, and there is no more coming to be."<sup>6</sup>

Without virtue, there is no concentration, without concentration, there is no wisdom (insight). These three are the cardinal teachings

which, when carefully and fully cultivated, raise a person from lower to higher levels of mental life, lead a person from darkness to light, from passion to dispassion, from turmoil to tranquility, from bondage to security—deliverance.

The seeker for deliverance, therefore, practises right speech, right action and right livelihood (*sīla* or virtue); he practises right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration (*samādhi* or concentration) and further practises right thought and right understanding (*paññā* or wisdom). The Buddha called this the Noble Eightfold Path or the Middle Path because it avoids two extremes: indulgence in sensual pleasures which is low, worldly and leads to harm, is one extreme; self torture in the form of severe asceticism which is painful, unprofitable and leads to harm, is the other.

Striving rightly, the seeker pierces the veils of truth one by one, till one day, all dross burnt away, sublime to the utmost he breaks through to enlightenment. When such a man dies, there finally ends with him this will to live. Thus end birth, ageing, disease, lamentation, grief, misery, despair and death; thus ends all suffering. The rolling wheel of life totters to its fall; its hub of ignorance, its spokes of greed and its rim of hatred are shattered and reduced to ashes at last and that is Nibbāna—“the unborn, unoriginated, unmade and unconditioned.”<sup>7</sup>

### Again and Again

Again and again, the seeds of corn are sown;  
     again and again, the deities send down rain;  
 Again and again, the farmers plough the fields;  
     again and again, the country is enriched.  
 Again and again, the almsmen beg for alms;  
     again and again, the kindly givers give;  
 And giving repeatedly, the givers make,  
     again and again, for happy worlds above.  
 Again and again, the milk is drawn from cows;  
     again and again, the calf goes to its dam;  
 Again and again, a being tires and quakes;  
     again and again, the fool goes to the womb.  
 Again and again, comes birth and death to you;



again and again, men bear you to the grave.  
But he who sees clearly goes to no place for birth;  
he is not reborn because he knows the path;  
He will not again be born in any world.<sup>8</sup>

## Stories of Rebirth

Many people visiting a place for the first time believe they have seen it before, others meet a person for the first time and are certain the face is familiar. Such experiences raise the question:

### **Have We Been Here Before? Is It Rebirth?**

Whether or not you believe in rebirth, it is more than likely that at some time in your life you have met someone who has told you a story of how when they first visited a place it seemed vividly familiar, or that a person they have met for the first time seemed to be someone they have met before.

What is the reason for this? Do you think it is the result of a dream of long ago? Or do you think that it is just a question of remarkable similarity?

You will find that the person concerned is convinced that their strange reaction is far more than a dream. It is too vivid, too real.

What then is the answer? First of all, consider the experiences of people still living today who are convinced that there is no other answer than rebirth.

### **Her First Baby**

This story by Parry Miller appeared in the *Sunday Times of Ceylon*, January 13, 1954.

Now let me tell you the strange story of a mother and her son. I talked to her in her flat not far from Hyde Park Corner.

The story began when she showed me the photograph of a grave in Kuala Lumpur, Malaya. It is the grave of her five-year-old son. And the headstone bears an inscription that is unique. Beneath a life-size stone effigy of a bonny child are carved these words:

To the glory of God  
and to the sweet memory  
of our dear son  
Philip Pryce Smith.  
Born October 22nd, 1920  
Died November 22nd, 1925  
Reborn February 23rd, 1927.  
God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform.

And here is the story of what Mrs. Smith describes as "the greatest experience of my life."

"I went out to Malaya as the bride of an engineer," she told me, "and Philip was our first baby. He was a handsome happy child and, of course, was the world to me. Then, in the steaming rain of a November monsoon, he fell suddenly ill. He had been stricken down with dysentery, and after an illness of only eight days he died—a month to the day after his fifth birthday. I was crazed with grief. I had, I hope, always been a devout, God-fearing woman. But I could not understand why a loving God should take my only child from me."

After the funeral Mrs. Smith's husband sent her on a cruise to Burma. But she remained inconsolable. She spent most of her time in the ship on her knees in her cabin or weeping uncontrollably on her bunk.

One day, early in December, as the ship was moving towards the Burmese port of Moulmein, Mrs. Smith, torn by anguish from the brink of sleep, knelt on the floor of her cabin once more. "I poured out my heart to God," she told me quietly, and when I rose I felt in the grip of a strange impulse. I felt it was imperative for me to talk to a certain Burmese whom I had seen on board. I did not know him, had never spoken to him. It was an impulse that had to be obeyed. I did not even wait to dress. I just threw a kimono around me, dashed out of my cabin and made my way on deck.



"There was the Burmese standing beside the rail, gazing out across the water to where stood Moulmein. I looked too. I saw a pagoda, gleaming in the sun. It was difficult to open a conversation. I felt tongue-tied. But finally my eyes again sought the pagoda. I gestured towards it asked him its name. And when he had told me I boldly asked: 'In your religion what do you believe happens to a child after it dies?'

"His reply was simple. 'We believe,' he said, 'the child dies—and then is born again.'

"And quite suddenly I seemed to understand everything. I felt I had been purposely directed to this Burmese, and that he had been led to give me the message I had so sought and prayed for. And suddenly I knew that all was going to be well, that my lost boy would be returned to me.

"Back again in Malaya I told my friends of my experience and of the firm belief that had come to me. They were, quite naturally, sceptical. They thought my sorrow had turned my head. I, too, began to wonder whether I had merely clutched at this belief because I was grief-stricken and needed comfort.

"As these doubts started to rise I almost began to despair again. And then further signs were given to me. I dreamed of my boy. He spoke to me, with his arms around my neck. 'I am coming back to you, mummy,' he said. And I found something that seemed to me, and still seems, a further sign. A picture book that had belonged to him. He was too young to write words, but he could print letters. And, running through this book one day I found he had printed with a pencil the word 'Pagoda.' I was astonished. I could not understand how he had ever come across this word. I could only take it for a further sign of the strange things that were happening.

"And then, in a dream somewhere in March 1926, and some 14 weeks after Philip's death, he told me again he was coming back. 'I will be back with you two months after Christmas, mummy,' he said. And it was nearly 12 months later in February 1927, that happened. Philip was born to me again."

Well, there is Mrs. Smith's astonishing story. She and I know what the sceptics will say. But her firm belief is not that she merely in her grief consoled herself with a comforting doctrine of the mystic East. It is that her child was literally born twice to her.

"If," she told me, "I ceased to believe that my Philip is the reincarnation of the Philip who died, I could not believe in God."

Today Philip is 26. He was educated at a famous English public school and is now an engineer working in Australia.

### **Twins Remember the Day They Died**

The story by John Macklin appeared in the *Ceylon Sunday Observer*, April 4, 1965.

*The story of the Pollock twins is perhaps the strongest link in the chain of evidence to support the theory of rebirth. They talk about events that occurred eight years ago—events that happened to two children who died before the twins were born.*

Eleven-year-old Joanna Pollock and her six-year-old sister, Jacqueline, skipped gaily down the pavement on their way to mass. It was Sunday in May 1957, in the seaside town of Whitley Bay. Suddenly, the peace of the early summer day was shattered. A car swept round a corner into the children. Both were fatally injured.

It was tragically hard for milk roundsman John Pollock and his wife Florence to accept that their daughters were dead. And every day it becomes harder. For the Pollocks are convinced that Joanna and Jacqueline are back in the little house overlooking the grey North Sea.

The story of the Pollock twins is already becoming the strongest link in the chain of evidence to support the theory of rebirth. Psychic researchers rate it one of the most baffling and intriguing stories of the decade.

Gillian and Jennifer were born seventeen months after the tragedy. No one has ever discussed with them details of their sisters' deaths ... yet they know about the accident down to the last detail. And everything they say tallies with facts. Jennifer, the younger



by ten minutes of the five-year-old twins, is the image of Jacqueline, the younger of the dead sisters. Photographs show the resemblance clearly.

Since the night she was born, Jennifer has had an unusual white scar just an inch and a quarter long running along her forehead. Jacqueline had an identical scar—the result of a fall when she was three years old. There are other uncanny similarities: Jennifer has a red-brown birthmark on her hip, about the size of a shilling—Jacqueline had one exactly the same.

The Pollocks are constantly noting similarities between the live children and the ones who are dead. For instance, Jennifer likes writing. Without any prompting she has adopted the peculiar habit of holding her pencil between the middle fingers of her right hand and propelling it with her first. Jacqueline did the same thing ....

Researchers are intrigued by the evidence Mr. and Mrs. Pollock have to offer. They have interviewed the girls and extracted facts about things and places that Jennifer and Gillian have never experienced or seen but Joanna and Jacqueline had.

Gillian copies Joanna in many ways, too. She uses many of the same expressions, has the same walk, the same tendency to lead her sister around by the hand.

But perhaps the most astounding fact is that the girls talk about the accident as if it had happened to them personally. Gillian speaks frequently of details no one has ever discussed with her. Recently, Mrs. Pollock found Gillian, her hands on Jennifer's shoulders, describing in close detail the injuries Jacqueline suffered in the crash.

Once, after the girls had gone for a walk, a neighbour found them crying by the roadside. They were standing in the precise spot where the tragedy had occurred—and again, no one had told them the exact location.

Jennifer once asked her mother, "What happened to Mr.? Is he still very upset about the crash?" She mentioned the name of the man who was driving the car, knew where he lived and what sort of vehicle he drove.

"Recently," says the father, "while I was in the loft I came upon a box of toys I had parcelled up after the children died. I know for a fact that the twins had never seen the box and could have no idea what it contained. I decided to give them the toys. Immediately I opened the box, Gillian pounced on a little toy wringer for squeezing out washed dolls' clothes and excitedly cried out: 'Look Daddy—here's my wringer again.' The toy had belonged to Joanna and it was her favourite plaything."

It is incidents like these—and there are plenty of them—which are bringing experts reluctantly to the conclusion that the Pollock twins have walked the earth before.

One of the last to be convinced was their father. He is a Roman Catholic, and that faith does not accept the theory of reincarnation. [There is evidence that pre-existence was accepted by the early Christian Church. But it was declared heretical by the Second Council of Constantinople in A.C. 553. See *Reincarnation, An East-West Anthology*, p. 321—The Author]. But since the children died he had a strange feeling that they would be replaced in the family by twin girls. Mrs Pollock scoffed at the idea—so did the doctors who examined her. They could detect only one heartbeat. But twins were born.

At first Mrs. Pollock could not accept the idea of reincarnation. Now she says: "I have been forced to take it seriously. The amazing physical likenesses, the uncanny things they say, and the similarity in the things they do have made me believe there must be something in it. People have come to the house—people who have not visited since Jacqueline and Joanna died but the twins recognise them instantly. They always know their names. How can you explain away things like this?"

Psychic researchers are asking the same question. "When the children are old enough," says John Pollock, "I shall tell them of my belief that they are really their two sisters returned to earth. Then they might choose to submit themselves to some sort of hypnosis which might reveal much more about their former lives." Then, and only then, will new light be shed on the baffling story of the Pollock twins—the girls who, it seems, are living life the second time around.



## Child Prodigies

Right through the ages, fantastic child prodigies have always presented profoundly interesting human case-histories.

Jean-Louis Gardiac, the "wonder-child" of the Chateau de Gardiac, in France, born in 1719 was reciting his alphabet when he was only three months old, and his mental progress was swift and sure. At the age of three he could read Latin with ease and at four could translate it in both French and English fluently. By the time he reached the age of six when most children are beginning to understand what school is all about, Gardiac was reading Greek and Hebrew, and was already a master of mathematics, history, geography and heraldry. Like so many true child geniuses, his life was short but spectacular, for he died in Paris when only seven.

How do you explain Mozart's composing music at the age of five? Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was born at Salizburg in Austria. By the age of three, it was evident that the boy was an infant prodigy. Wolfgang's tiny fingers began to call forth melodies from the painoforte and he was soon a proficient performer on a miniature violin. By the time he was four, he had written his first sonata. At seven his first full opera was finished.

Then there was the Polish prodigy Josef Hofman, who was playing the piano at a year and a half, tripping off classical numbers when he could hardly reach upto the piano? Is there a reasonable answer other than the result of remembering past experiences?

How do you explain somebody like Sir William Hamilton? He was speaking Hebrew when he was three ... By the time he was thirteen William Hamilton could speak thirteen languages, among them Persian, Arabic and Hindustani.

You could argue, I suppose, that these infant prodigies merely inherited their genius. But the strange thing is that most of them did not have parents or families with an aptitude for the things they excelled in. Heredity does not seem to fit, does not seem to provide the explanation. "Reincarnation Fact or Fiction?" by Don Easterd, *Ceylon Times Weekender*, September 2, 1967.

**Notes:**

1. In the preparation for this section of the book, the author wishes to acknowledge the extensive use of the following books: *Rebirth Explained*, V. F. Gunaratna, (Wheel 167/169), *Survival and Karma in Buddhist Perspective*, Prof. K. N. Jayatilleka, (Wheel 141/143), and *Rebirth As Doctrine and Experience* (Collected Writings: Vol. II), Francis Story, all of the works from BPS.
2. Cūla Kammavibhaṅga Sutta, M. 135.
3. S. iii, 149, 151.
4. A. S. Ayer, *The Concept of a Person*, London 1963, p. 137.
5. M. 38.
6. D. 16.
7. Ud. viii, 1, also Sara Sutta, Devatā Saṃyutta.
8. Upāsaka Vagga, Udaya Sutta, Saṃyutta Nikāya, trans. by Ven. Soma Thera.



## 8

# Dependent Arising

## *Paṭicca-Samuppāda*

### Introduction

Dependent arising, *paṭicca-samuppāda*, is a basic teaching of Buddhism. The doctrine therein being so deep and profound it is not possible within the limited scope of this essay to make an extensive survey of the subject. Based solely on the teaching of the Buddha an attempt is made here to elucidate this doctrine, leaving aside the complex details involved.

Scholars and writers have in various forms rendered this term into English. "Dependent origination," "dependent arising," "conditioned co-production," "causal conditioning," "causal genesis," "conditioned genesis," "causal dependencies" are some renderings. Through-out this essay the term dependent arising is used. Dependent arising is not a discourse for the unintelligent and superficial, nor is it a doctrine to be grasped by speculation and mere logic put forward by hair-splitting disputants. Hear these words of the Buddha:

"Deep, indeed, Ānanda, is this *paṭicca-samuppāda*, and deep does it appear. It is through not understanding, through not penetrating this doctrine, that these beings have become entangled like a matted ball of thread, become like *muñja* grass and rushes, unable to pass beyond the woeful states of existence and *samsāra*, the cycle of existence."<sup>1</sup>

Those who fail to understand the real significance of this all-important doctrine mistake it to be a mechanical law of causality, or even a simple simultaneous arising, nay a first beginning of all things, animate and inanimate. Be it remembered that there is no First Cause with a capital 'F' and a capital 'C' in Buddhist thought, and dependent arising does not attempt to dig out or even investigate a first cause.

The Buddha emphatically declared that the first beginning of existence is something inconceivable,<sup>2</sup> and that such notions and speculations of a beginning may lead to mental derangement.<sup>3</sup> If one posits a 'First Cause' one is justified in asking for the cause of that 'First Cause,' for nothing can escape the law of condition and cause which is patent in the world to all but those who will not see.

According to Aldous Huxley: "Those who make the mistake of thinking in terms of a first cause are fated never to become men of science. But as they do not know what science is, they are not aware that they are losing anything. To refer phenomena back to a first cause has ceased to be fashionable, at any rate in the West ... We shall never succeed in changing our age of iron into an age of gold until we give up our ambition to find a single cause for all our ills, and admit the existence of many causes acting simultaneously, of intricate correlations and reduplicated actions and reactions."<sup>4</sup>

A Creator-God who rewards and punishes the good deeds and ill deeds of the creatures of his creation has no place in Buddhist thought. A theist, however, who attributes beings and events to an omnipotent Creator-God would emphatically say, "It is God's will; it is sacrilege to question the Authority." This god-idea, however, stifles the human liberty to investigate, to analyse, to scrutinize, to see what is beyond this naked eye, and retards insight.

Let us grant for argument's sake that 'x' is the 'first cause.' Now does this assumption of ours bring us one bit nearer to our goal, our deliverance? Does it not close the door to it? Buddhism, on the other hand, states that things are neither due to one cause (*ekahetuka*), nor are they causeless (*ahetuka*). The twelve factors of *paṭicca-samuppāda* and the twenty-four conditioning relations (*paccaya*) shown in the Paṭṭhāna, the seventh and the last book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, clearly demonstrate how things are "multiple-caused" (*aneka-hetuka*); and in stating that things are neither causeless nor due to one single cause, Buddhism antedated modern science by twenty-five centuries.

We see a reign of natural law—beginningless causes and effects and naught else ruling the universe. Every effect becomes in turn a cause and it goes on forever (as long as ignorance and craving are allowed to continue). A coconut, for instance, is the principal cause or



near cause of a coconut tree. 'X' has two parents, four grandparents, and thus the law of cause and effect extends unbrokenly like the waves of the sea—*ad infinitum*.

It is just impossible to conceive of a first beginning. None can trace the ultimate origin of anything, not even of a grain of sand, let alone of human beings. It is useless and meaningless to go in search of a beginning in a beginningless past. Life is not an identity, it is a becoming. It is a flux of psychological and physiological changes, a conflux of mind and body (*nāma-rūpa*).

"There is no reason to suppose that the world had a beginning at all. The idea that things must have a beginning is really due to the poverty of our imagination. Therefore, perhaps, I need not waste any more time upon the argument about the first cause."<sup>5</sup>

Instead of a first cause, the Buddha speaks of conditionality. The whole world is subject to the law of cause and effect, in other words, action and reaction. We cannot think of anything in this cosmos that is causeless and unconditioned.

As Viscount Samuel says: "There is no such thing as chance. Every event is the consequence of previous events; everything that happens is the effect of a combination of multitude of prior causes; and like causes always produce like effects. The laws of causality and of the uniformity of nature prevail everywhere and always."<sup>6</sup>

Buddhism teaches that all compounded things come into being, presently exist, and cease (*uppāda, ṭhiti, bhaṅga*), dependent on conditions and causes. Compare the truth of this saying with that oft-quoted verse of the Arahat Thera Assaji, one of the Buddha's first five disciples, who crystallized the entire teaching of the Buddha when answering the question of Upatissa who later became known as Arahat Thera Sāriputta.

Upatissa's question was: "What is your teacher's doctrine? What does he proclaim?"

And this was the answer:

*"ye dhammā hetuppabhavā—tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha,  
tesaṃ ca yo nirodho—evaṃ vādi mahāsamaṇo."*

“Whatever from a cause proceeds, thereof  
 The Tathāgatha has explained the cause,  
 Its cessation too he has explained.  
 This is the teaching of the Supreme Sage.”<sup>7</sup>

Though brief, this expresses in unequivocal words dependent arising or conditionality.

As the text says, during the whole of the first week, immediately after his enlightenment, the Buddha sat at the foot of the Bodhi Tree at Gayā, experiencing the supreme bliss of emancipation. When the seven days had elapsed, he emerged from that *samādhi*, that state of concentrative thought, and during the first watch of the night thought over the dependent arising, as to how things arise, (*anuloma*) thus: “When this is, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises, namely: dependent on ignorance, volitional formations; dependent on formations, consciousness ... and so on ... This is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.”<sup>8</sup>

Then in the middle watch of the night, he pondered over the dependent arising as to how things cease (*paṭiloma*)<sup>9</sup> thus: “When this is not, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases, namely: with the utter cessation of ignorance, the cessation of volitional formations ... and so on ... Thus is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.”

In the last watch of the night, he reflected over the dependent arising, both as to how things arise and cease thus: “When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases, namely: dependent on ignorance, of volitional formations ... and so on ... Thus is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.”<sup>10</sup>

One may justifiably be inclined to pose the question: Why did the Buddha not set forth the doctrine of dependent arising in his first discourse,<sup>11</sup> the sermon delivered to the five ascetics, his erstwhile companions, at Sarnath, Benares? The answer is this: the main points discussed in that all-important sermon are the Four Noble Truths: suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the way to the cessation of suffering, the Noble Eightfold Path. There is no statement in it about dependent arising; but he who understands the philosophical and



doctrinal significance of dependent arising certainly understands that the twelve-fold *paṭicca-samuppāda*, dependent arising, both in its order of arising and ceasing (*anuloma* and *paṭiloma*), is included in the Four Noble Truths.

The *paṭicca-samuppāda* in its order of arising manifests the process of becoming (*bhava*), in other words, the appearance of suffering (*dukkha*, the first truth); and how this process of becoming or suffering is conditioned (*dukkha-samudaya*, the second truth). In its order of ceasing the *paṭicca-samuppāda* makes plain the cessation of this becoming, this suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*, the third truth), and how it ceases (*dukkha-nirodha gāmini paṭipadā*, the fourth truth). The Buddha-word with regard to this fact appears in the Anguttara Nikāya thus:

“And what, monks, is the noble truth of the arising of suffering? Dependent on ignorance arise volitional formations; dependent on volitional formations, consciousness; dependent on consciousness, mentality-materiality (mental and physical combination); dependent on mentality-materiality, the six-fold base (the five physical sense organs and consciousness as the sixth); dependent on the six-fold base, contact; dependent on contact, feeling; dependent on feeling, craving; dependent on craving, clinging; dependent on clinging, the process of becoming (rebirth); dependent on the process of becoming, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair come to pass. Thus does the whole mass of suffering arise. This, monks, is called the noble truth of the arising of suffering.

“And what, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering? Through the entire cessation of ignorance cease volitional formations; through the cessation of volitional formations, consciousness ... (and so on) ... the cessation of the whole mass of suffering. This, monks, is called the cessation of suffering.”<sup>12</sup>

It is now abundantly clear from the foregoing that the *paṭicca-samuppāda*, with its twelve factors, is the teaching of the Buddha and not, as some are inclined to think, the work of some writers on the Dhamma of later times. It is unreasonable, even dangerous, to rush into conclusions without fully understanding the significance of the *paṭicca-samuppāda*.

Dependent arising or the doctrine of conditionality, is often explained in severely practical terms, but it is not a mere pragmatism, though it may appear to be so, owing to such explanation resorted to for brevity's sake. Those conversant with the Tipiṭaka (the Buddhist Pali Canon) know that in the teachings of the *paṭicca-samuppāda* is found that which brings out the basic principles of knowledge (*ñāṇa*) and wisdom (*paññā*) in the *saddhamma*, the Good Law. In this teaching of the conditionality of everything in the world, that is the five aggregates, can be realized the essence of the Buddha's outlook on life. So if the Enlightened One's explanation of the world is to be rightly understood, it has to be through a full grasp of this central teaching summed up in the dictum: "*ye dhammā hetup-pabhavā...*" referred to above.

The doctrine of *paṭicca-samuppāda* is not the work of some divine power; it is not a creation. Whether a Buddha arises or not the fact is:

"When this is, that comes to be,  
With the arising of this, that arises,  
When this is not, that does not come to be,  
With the cessation of this, that ceases?"<sup>13</sup>

This conditionality goes on forever, uninterrupted and uncontrolled by an external agency or power of any sort. The Buddha discovered this eternal truth, solved the riddle of life, unravelled the mystery of being by comprehending, in all its fullness, the *paṭicca-samuppāda* with its twelve factors, and expounded it, without keeping back aught that is essential, to those who yet have sufficient intelligence to wish for light.

## I. Ignorance (*Avijjā*)

Let us now deal with the twelve factors of the *paṭicca-samuppāda*, one by one, in due order. The first point for discussion is *avijjā* (Sanskrit, *avidyā*), ignorance. *Moha*, delusion and *aññāṇa*, non-knowledge, are synonyms for *avijjā*. What is *avijjā*? It is the non-knowledge of the Supreme Enlightenment. In other words, not knowing the Four Noble Truths. It is also not-knowing dependent arising. Owing to this nescience, the uninstructed worldling entertains wrong views. He regards the impermanent as permanent, the painful as pleasant, the



soulless as soul, the godless as god, the impure as pure, and the unreal as real. Further, *avijjā* is the non-perception of the conglomerate nature of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhadha*), or mind and body.

Ignorance or delusion is one of the root causes of all unwholesome actions, all moral defilements (*akusala*). All conceivable wrong notions are the result of ignorance. Independently of this crowning corruption no ill action, whether mental, verbal or physical could be performed. That is why ignorance is enumerated as the first link of the chain of the twelvefold *paṭicca-samuppāda*. Nevertheless, ignorance should not be regarded as a *prima causa*, a first beginning, or an ultimate origin of things. It is certainly not the first cause; there is no conception of a first cause in Buddhist thought. The doctrine of *paṭicca-samuppāda* can be illustrated by a circle for it is the cycle of existence, *bhava cakka*. In a circle any given point may be taken as the starting point. Each and every factor of the *paṭicca-samuppāda* can be joined together with another of the series, and therefore, no single factor can stand by itself or function independently of the rest. All are interdependent and inseparable. Nothing is independent, or isolated. Dependent arising is an unbroken process. In this process nothing is stable or fixed, but all is in a whirl. It is the arising of ever changing conditions dependent on similar evanescent conditions. Here there is neither absolute non-existence nor absolute existence, only bare phenomena roll on (*suddha dhammā pavattanti*).

Ignorance, the first factor of the series, therefore, is not the sole condition for volitional formations, the second factor (*sankhāra*). A tripod, for instance, is supported by its three legs; it stands upright because of the interdependence of the legs. If one gives way, the other two fall to the ground unsupported. So, too, the factors of this *paṭicca-samuppāda* support one another in various ways.

## II. Volitional Formations (*Sankhāra*)

*Avijjā paccayā sankhārā*, "dependent on ignorance arise rebirth-producing volitional formations." The term *sankhāra* has also another meaning. In the statement, "*sabbe sankhārā aniccā*" or "*aniccā vata sankhārā*" (all compounded things are impermanent), the term "*sankhārā*" applies to all compounded and conditioned things, i.e., all things that come into being as the effect of causes and conditions and

which themselves act as causes and conditions in turn again to give rise to other effects. In the *paṭicca-samuppāda*, however, *sankhāra* is restricted to mean simply all good and evil actions (*kusala-akusala kamma*), all actions, physical, verbal and mental (*kāya-sankhāra*, *vacī-sankhāra*, and *citta-sankhāra*) which will bring about reactions. It is difficult to give a satisfactory English equivalent to the term *sankhāra*. Let us, therefore, understand it in this context as rebirth-producing volitional activities, or volitional formations or simply as *kamma*.

Ignorance, *avijjā*, which has taken root in man is the blindness that prevents a man from seeing his actions as they really are, and so allows craving to drive him on to further actions. If there were no ignorance, there would be no such actions (*sankhāra*). In the absence of actions conditioned by ignorance, there will be no rebirth, and the whole mass of suffering will cease. In order to exemplify how the twelve factors of the *paṭicca-samuppāda* act upon a connected sequence of lives, the formula has been conceived as extending over three consecutive existences past, present and future.

Ignorance and volitional formations belong to the previous birth. Wholesome *sankhāras* are capable of bringing about a good rebirth, i.e. birth in a good state of existence. Unwholesome *sankhāras* can cause a bad rebirth or birth in an evil state of existence. It must be mentioned that all *sankhāras*, all good and evil actions, have ignorance as condition. Here a question may be raised as to how actions conditioned by ignorance could bring about good rebirth.

All attainment of good (*kusala*), from the state of the virtuous worldling (*kalyāṇaputhujjana*) and the "lesser stream-winner" (*cūlasotāpanna*) to that of the consummate one (*Arahat*) is due to the balance of insight over delusion and of detachment over craving. Good actions are the direct consequence of whatever clear understanding there may be in the doer. It is not because of delusion and craving that a man gives up killing, etc., but because he has the wisdom to see the evil consequences of such actions and also because he is moved by such qualities as compassion and virtue. It is not possible, except for the perfect ones, to act from complete insight or detachment. To the generality of men such knowledge is unthinkable. As Eddington says, "If 'to know' means 'to be quite certain of' the



term is of little use to those who wish to be undogmatic.”<sup>14</sup> And if to be detached means to be neutral always, such detachment is for the imperfect quite impossible, and meaningless. But occasional detachment is possible, and a measure of knowledge adequate for understanding the good is available for an intelligent man of virtue, for producing actions that are wise and unsoiled by the yearning for rewards in this life. There is much that is done in the world today with no hope of reward, or recognition, out of compassion or for the furtherance of knowledge and peace. Such actions definitely are based on knowledge and detachment, not perhaps in the dogmatic, scholastic, or merely metaphysical sense, but in the light of sane, undogmatic thought. Good actions may well have ulterior motives, for instance, the yearning for the fruits of the good; but even in such instances, though tainted by greed and to that extent by delusion, there are in such good actions, for instance in liberality, the detachment to let go and the knowledge of seeing the evils of not giving at all, and the advantage of giving. The presence of craving and ignorance in a person does not mean that he can never act with insight and detachment.

Now it must also be understood that although man is capable of performing good actions unsoiled by strong desire for rewards in this life, there may be in him, unconsciously working, a tender longing for good rebirth, or a feeling of desire for rewards in the hereafter. Again, though he may be doing an action out of compassion and without any ulterior motives, he may still be lacking in full awareness of the real nature of life — its being impermanent, sorrow-stricken, and void of an abiding entity or soul. This non-knowledge of the real nature of life, though not so gross and strong as the delusion that induces a heinous act, can yet induce kammically wholesome action leading to a good rebirth. A good rebirth even in the heavens, is, however, temporary, and may be followed immediately by an unhappy rebirth.

Such non-knowledge motivates and colours the good act. If, for instance, the performance of good actions is motivated by the desire for the resultant happiness in a good rebirth in a heavenly realm, or on earth, then that is the ignorance of the impermanence and unsatisfactory nature of all existence, which becomes a condition of good rebirth i.e. an inducement or support condition (*upanissaya paccaya*). In these, and other ways, ignorance may act as a condition of good rebirth

by motivating or colouring good volitional activities (*sankhāra*) of a mundane (*lokiya*) nature. Such is the intrinsic nature of ignorance.

Ignorance of the real nature of life is primarily the ignorance of the Four Noble Truths. It is because of this non-knowledge of the truths that beings take birth again and again.

Says the Buddha:

"Monks, it is through not understanding, not penetrating the Four Noble Truths that we have run so long, wandered on so long in this long long way, both you and I ... But when these Four Noble Truths are understood and penetrated, rooted out is the craving for existence, destroyed is that which leads to renewed becoming, and there is no more coming to be."<sup>15</sup>

Only the actions of a man who has entirely eradicated all the latent tendencies (*anusaya*), and all the varied ramifications of sorrow's cause, are incapable of producing rebirth; for such actions are issueless. He is the Arahāt, Consummate One, whose clarity of vision, whose depth of insight penetrates into the deepest recesses of life, in whom craving has quite ceased through cognizing the true nature that underlies all appearance. He has transcended all appearance. He has transcended all capacity for error through the perfect immunity which penetrative insight, *vipassanā*, alone can give. He is, therefore, released from ignorance (*avijjā*) and his actions no more bring about rebirth.

### III. Consciousness (*Viññāṇa*)

*Sankhāra paccayā viññāṇam* "dependent on rebirth-producing volitional formations (belonging to the previous birth), arises consciousness (re-linking or rebirth consciousness)." To express it in another way, dependent on the kamma or good and evil actions of the past, is conditioned the conscious life in this present birth. Consciousness, therefore, is the first factor (*nidāna*), or first of the conditioning links belonging to the present existence. *Avijjā* and *sankhāra*, ignorance and volitional formations belonging to the past, together produce *viññāṇa*, consciousness in this birth. We read in the Mahā Nidāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya, how "once ignorance and craving are destroyed, good and evil actions no more come into being,



consequently no more rebirth consciousness will spring up again in a mother's womb." Hence it is clear that rebirth is caused by one's own good and evil actions, and is not the work of a supreme being, a Creator-God, nor is it due to mere chance.

As this consciousness or *viññāṇa* is the first of the stream of consciousness (*citta-santati*) belonging to one single existence (*bhava*), it is also known as *paṭisandhi viññāṇa*, re-linking consciousness. The term *paṭisandhi* literally means re-linking, re-uniting, re-joining. It is re-birth, re-entry into the womb. Rebirth is the arising, the coming to be, the being born, in the future (*paṭisandhīti āyatim uppatti*). It is called re-uniting because of its linking back the new existence to the old (*bhavantara paṭisandhānato paṭisandhīti vuccati*). The joining back of the new to the old is the function of re-uniting or re-linking. Therefore, it is said, the function of re-uniting is the joining together of (one) existence with (another) existence (*bhavato bhavassa paṭisandhānam paṭisandhī kiccam*). *Paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* is the kamma-resultant consciousness (*vipāka viññāṇa*) present at rebirth, connecting the new existence with the immediately preceeding one, and through that with the entire past of the "being" re-born. This resultant consciousness is due to previous rebirth-producing volitional formations (*sankhārā* or *kamma*).

In the Anenjasappāya Sutta,<sup>16</sup> the *vipāka viññāṇa* is referred to as *saṁvattanikam viññāṇam*, the consciousness that links on, proceeds in one life as *vipāka* from the kamma in the former life.

When it is said, "the consciousness that links on," it does not mean that this consciousness abides unchanged, continues in the same state without perishing throughout this cycle of existence. Consciousness is also conditioned, and, therefore, is not permanent. Consciousness also comes into being and passes away yielding place to new consciousness. Thus this perpetual stream of consciousness goes on until existence ceases. Existence in a way is consciousness. In the absence of consciousness no "being" exists in this sentient world.

In the "Buddhist Doctrine of Rebirth" the third factor required for rebirth, the *gandhabba*, is called "the rebirth consciousness" (see above p.123), which is another term for the *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*, re-linking consciousness.<sup>17</sup> There is the last moment of consciousness

(*cuti citta*) belonging to the immediately previous life. Immediately next upon the cessation of that consciousness there arises the first moment of consciousness of the present birth, which as stated above, is termed re-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*). Between these two moments of consciousness, however, there is no interval, there is no *antarābhava* or *antarābhava-satta* which means, "either a being in the womb or a being in between the state of death and that of rebirth," as some of the Mahāyāna schools of thought maintain (*asti antar bhavah*).<sup>18</sup> It should be clearly understood that this re-linking consciousness is not a "self" or a "soul" or an ego entity that experiences the fruits (*vipāka*) of good and evil deeds. The Mahātanhā-sankhaya Sutta records the following incident:

During the time of the Buddha there was a monk called Sāti who held the following view: "In so far as I understand the Dhamma taught by the Buddha, it is the same consciousness that transmigrates and wanders about (in rebirth)."

The monks who heard of this endeavoured to dissuade Sāti, saying, "Do not, brother Sāti, speak thus, do not misrepresent the Lord; neither is misrepresentation of the Lord seemly, nor would the Lord speak thus. For, brother Sāti, in many a figure is dependent arising spoken of in connection with consciousness by the Lord, saying: 'Apart from condition there is no origination of consciousness.'"

But Sāti would not change his view. Thereupon the monks reported the matter to the Buddha who summoning him, spoke to him thus:

"Is it true, as is said, that a pernicious view like this has accrued to you, Sāti: 'In so far as I understand the Dhamma taught by the Lord, it is this consciousness itself that runs on, fares on, not another'?"

"Even so do I, Lord, understand the Dhamma taught by the Lord: 'It is this consciousness itself that runs on, fares on, not another.'"

"What is this consciousness, Sati?"

"It is that which expresses, which feels (*vado vedeyyo*) and experiences the result of good and evil deeds now here now there."



“But to whom, foolish man have you heard me teaching the Dhamma in this wise? Have I not in many ways explained consciousness as arising out of conditions, that apart from conditions there is no arising of consciousness? But now you, foolish man, misrepresent me because of your own wrong grasp.”<sup>19</sup>

The Buddha then explained the different types of consciousness and made clear, by means of examples, how consciousness arises depending on conditions.

In the words of the Buddha, the *paṭicca-samuppāda* is a very deep and intricate doctrine, and in this difficult doctrine the most subtle and deep point, difficult to grasp, is this third link, consciousness, *viññāṇa* or *paṭisandhi viññāṇa*; for it is this link that explains rebirth.

#### IV. Mentality-Materiality (*Nāma-Rūpa*)

*Viññāṇa paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*, “dependent on consciousness arises mentality-materiality.” The term *nāma* here stands for the mental states (*cetasika*), in other words, the three mental groups: namely, feeling (*vedanākkhandha*), perception (*saññākkhandha*), volitional or mental formations or disposition (*sankhārakkhandha*).

The so called “being” (*satta*, Skt. *sattva*) is composed of five aggregates or groups (*pañcakkhandha*); namely, physical body, feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness (*rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra* and *viññāṇa*). If consciousness is taken as the mind, then feeling, perceptions and volitional formations are the concomitants or factors of that mind. Now when we say dependent on consciousness arises *nāma-rūpa*, mentality-materiality, materiality means the physical body, its organs, faculties and functions. Mentality means the factors of the mind mentioned above. In other words, *viññāṇa-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ* means dependent on consciousness arise the three mental-concomitant factors (feeling, perception and volitional formations) that compose mentality, along with the conascent material body in its first embryonic stage.

Consciousness and its factors (*citta-cetasika*) are always inter-related and interdependent. Consciousness cannot arise and function independently of its factors, nor can the factors arise and function

without the consciousness. They arise simultaneously (*sahajāta-paccaya*) and have no independent existence.

### V. The Sixfold Base (*Salāyatana*)

*Nāma-rūpa paccayā salāyatanaṃ*, "dependent on mentality-materiality arises the sixfold base," the five physical sense organs, eye, ear, nose, tongue and body, and the mind base (*manāyatana*). *Manāyatana* is a collective term for the many different classes of consciousness, i.e. for the five kinds of sense-consciousness, and the many kinds of mind-consciousness. Hence, five bases are physical phenomena, namely eye, ear, nose, tongue and body, and the sixth, mind base, is identical with consciousness.<sup>20</sup>

The function of *viññāṇa*, consciousness, is varied. The third factor of the chain is made known to us as *viññāṇa*; now here again we hear of a sixth base, *manāyatana*, which is identical with consciousness, but here by *manāyatana* different types of consciousness are meant. It should be borne in mind that consciousness is not something that is permanent and everlasting; it undergoes change, not remaining the same for two consecutive moments; it comes into being and immediately passes away yielding place to a new consciousness. "These mental phenomena are, as it were, only the different aspects of those units of consciousness which like lightning every moment flash up and immediately thereafter disappear for ever."<sup>21</sup>

If there were no *nāma-rūpa* (mentality-materiality), no *salāyatana* (sixfold base) could arise. Because of *rūpa*, the physical sense organs, eye, ear, etc. appear, and because of *manāyatana* (different types of consciousness) the physical sense organs function. Thus *nāma-rūpa* and *salāyatana* are inescapably inter-related and inter-dependent.

### VI. Contact (*Phassa*)

*Salāyatana paccayā phasso*, "dependent on the sixfold base arises contact." In the preceding proposition we saw the sixfold base or *āyatana*s, eye, ear, etc.; they are internal bases (*ajjhātika-āyatana*). External to one's material body, there are the corresponding five sense objects, form, sound, smell, taste, and tactile object and further, the mental objects. These are known as the six external bases (*bāhira-āyatana*). These external bases are food for man's internal bases.



Hence they are inter-related. Although there is this functional relationship between these six sensitivities and their objects, awareness comes with *viññāṇa*, or consciousness. Hence it is said, "If consciousness arises because of eye and forms it is termed visual consciousness."

Now when eye and forms are both present, visual consciousness arises dependent on them. Similarly with ear and sounds, and so on, down to mind and mental objects (ideas). Again, when the three, namely, eye, forms and eye-consciousness or visual consciousness come together, it is their coincidence that is called "contact" (or impression). From contact there arises feeling, and so on.<sup>22</sup>

Thus it is clear that contact (*phassa*) is conditioned by both the internal sixfold base (*ajjhaticā-āyatana*) and the external sixfold base (*bāhira-āyatana*).

In brief, dependent on the sixfold base arises contact or impressions, means: The visual contact conditioned by the eye; the sound contact conditioned by the ear; the smell contact conditioned by the nose; the taste contact conditioned by the tongue; the bodily contact conditioned by the body; the mental contact conditioned by the mind.

## VII. Feeling (*Vedanā*)

*Phassa paccayā vedanā*, "dependent on contact arises feeling." Feeling is sixfold: feeling born of visual contact; feeling born of sound contact; feeling born of smell contact; feeling born of taste contact; feeling born of body contact and feeling born of mental contact.

Feeling may be pleasurable (*sukha*), painful (*dukkha*), or neutral, i.e., neither pleasurable nor painful (*adukkhamasukha=upekkhā*).

As stated in the preceding clause, sense objects can never be cognised by the particular sensitivity without the appropriate kind of consciousness, but when these three factors come together, there arises contact. With the arising of contact, simultaneously there arises feeling (*vedanā*) and it can never be stopped by any power or force. Such is the nature of contact and feeling. The experiencing of desirable or undesirable kamma-results of good and evil actions performed here or in a previous birth, is one of the prior conditions due to which feeling can arise.

Seeing a form, hearing a sound, smelling an odour, tasting a flavour, touching some tangible thing, cognising a mental object (idea), man experiences feeling; but it cannot be said that all beings experience the same feeling with the same object. An object, for instance, which may be felt agreeable by one, may be felt unpleasant by another, and neutral by still another. Feeling also may differ in accordance with circumstances. A sense object which once evoked unpleasant feelings in us may possibly produce pleasant feelings in us under different circumstances, in a totally different background — geographical condition, climatic conditions, etc. Thus we learn how feeling is conditioned by contact.

### VIII. Craving (*Taṇhā*)

*Vedanā paccayā taṇhā*, "dependent on feeling arises craving." Craving has its source, its genesis, its rise in feeling. All forms of appetite are included in *taṇhā*. Greed, thirst, desire, lust, burning, yearning, longing, inclination affection, household love are some of the many terms that denote *taṇhā* which in the words of the Buddha is the leader to becoming (*bhavanetti*). Becoming which manifests itself as *dukkha*, as suffering, frustration, painful excitement, is our own experience. The enemy of the whole world is lust or craving through which all evils come to living beings. Through clear understanding of craving, the origin of craving, the cessation of craving, the true way of practice leading to the cessation of craving, one disentangles this tangle.

What then is craving? It is this craving which causes re-becoming, rebirth, accompanied by passionate pleasure, and finding fresh delight now here, now there, namely, craving for sense pleasures (*kāma-taṇhā*), craving for continued existence, for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*) and craving for non-existence, for self-annihilation (*vibhava-taṇhā*).<sup>23</sup> "Where does craving arise and take root? Where there is the delightful and the pleasurable, there craving arises and takes root. Forms, sounds, smell, taste, bodily contacts and ideas are delightful and pleasurable, there craving arises and takes root."<sup>24</sup>

Craving when obstructed by some cause is transformed to wrath and frustration. "From craving arises grief, from craving arises fear. To one free from craving there is no grief. Whence fear?"<sup>25</sup>



Man is always attracted by the pleasant and the delightful, and in his search for pleasure he ceaselessly runs after the six kinds of sense-objects and clings to them. He little realizes that no amount of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles and mental objects will ever satisfy the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and the mind. In this intense thirst for either possessions or the gratification of desires, he gets bound to the wheel of *saṃsāra*, is twisted and torn between the spokes of agony, and securely closes the door to final deliverance. The Buddha was most emphatic against this mad rush, and warned:

“Pleasure is a bond, a joy that’s brief,  
Of little taste, leading to drawn-out pain.  
The wise know that the hook is baited.”<sup>26</sup>

All mundane pleasures are fleeting; like sugar-coated pills of poison they deceive us, insidiously working harm. As stated above, whenever craving for these objects is connected with sensual pleasures, it is called “sensuous craving.” When it is associated with the belief in eternal personal existence, then it is called “craving for continued existence.” This is what is known as *sassata diṭṭhi* or eternalism. When craving is associated with the belief in self-annihilation at death, then it is called “craving for self-annihilation” (*vibhava-taṇhā*); this is what is known as *uccheda-diṭṭhi* or nihilism.

Craving is conditioned not only by pleasurable and agreeable feelings, but by unhappy and unpleasant feelings, too. A man in distress craves and thirsts to get rid of it, and longs for happiness and release. To express it in another way, the poor and the needy, the sick and the disabled, in brief, all sufferers, crave for happiness, security and solace. On the other hand, the rich, the healthy who have not glimpsed the sufferings of the distressed, and who are already experiencing pleasure, also crave. They crave and long for more and more pleasures. Thus craving is insatiable. As cattle go in search of fresh pasture so do people go in quest of fleeting pleasures, constantly seeking fuel for this life-flame. Their greed is inordinate.

“All is burning, all is in flames.” And what is the “all” that is in flames, that is burning? The five sense organs and the five sense objects are burning. Mind and thoughts are burning. The five aggregates of grasping (*pañca upādānakkhandha*) are burning. With what

are they burning? With the fire of craving, with the fire of hate, with the fire of delusion."<sup>27</sup>

A fire keeps burning so long as there is fuel. The more fuel we add, the more it burns. It is the same with the fire of life.

Craving is an insatiable fire and no fire is ever contented. Such is the nature of this corruption that spreads right up to the highest plane of existence (*bhavagga*) with respect to spheres, and right up to the *gottabhū citta*, the threshold of sainthood, with respect to mind-flux. Where there is no self-desire, there indeed, is no sense desire either; and where there is no self-desire there all ill dies out like a flame whose fuel is spent.

It is only when suffering comes, as its consequence, and not before, that one realizes the viciousness of this poisonous creeper of craving which winds itself round all who are not Arahats or perfectly pure ones who have uprooted its tap-root, ignorance. The more we crave, the more we suffer; sorrow is the tribute we have to pay for having craved. Wherefore, know this craving as our foe here, in *saṃsāra*, that guides us to continued and repeated sentient existence, and so builds the "House of Being."

The Buddha on attaining full Enlightenment spoke these joyful words:

"Repeated births are each a torment,  
Seeking but not finding the 'House Builder,'  
I wandered through many a saṃsāric birth.  
O House Builder, thou art seen,  
Thou wilt not rebuild the house.  
All thy rafters have been shattered,  
Demolished has thy ridge pole been.  
My mind has now attained the unformed Nibbāna,  
The extinction of craving is achieved (arahatship)."<sup>28</sup>

## IX. Clinging (*Upādāna*)

*Taṇhā paccayā upādānam* "dependent on craving arises clinging." This is the mental state that clings to, or grasps the object even as a piece of raw meat that sticks to a sauce-pan. Because of this clinging which is described as craving in a high degree, man becomes a



slave to passion, and falls into the net he himself has made of his passion for pleasure, like the caterpillar that spins itself a tangle in which it lives.

*Upādāna*, clinging or attachment, is fourfold: i. attachment to sensuous pleasures or sense desires (*kāma-upādāna*); ii. attachment to wrong and evil views (*diṭṭhi-upādāna*); iii. attachment to mere external observances, rites and rituals (*śīlabbata-upādāna*); and iv. attachment to self, or a lasting soul-entity (*attavāda-upādāna*).

*Kāma* here means both the craving and the craved object (*kilesa-kāma* and *vatthu-kāma*) and when that craving for such desired objects becomes intensified, it is known as *kāma-upādāna* or clinging. Man entertains thoughts of craving, and in proportion as he fails to ignore them, they grow till they get intensified to the degree of tenacious clinging.

All the various wrong views (*diṭṭhi*) that were in existence during the time of the Buddha can be included in annihilationism (*uccheda diṭṭhi*) and eternalism (*sassata diṭṭhi*). To some, especially to the intellectuals, at times the giving up of a view that they have cherished is more difficult than giving up objects of sense. Of all wrong views the clinging to a belief in a soul or self or an abiding ego-entity (*attavāda-upādāna*) is the strongest, foremost and most pernicious.

It is not without good reason that the Buddha rejected the notion of a self or soul (*atta*). In this conflux of mind and body which undergoes change without remaining the same for two consecutive moments, the Buddha could not see a lasting, indestructible soul. In other words, he could locate no abiding soul in this ever-changing "being." The Master, therefore, emphatically denied an *atta* either in the five aggregates (material form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, consciousness) or elsewhere. "All this," he said, "is void of an *atta* or anything of the nature of an *atta* (*suññam idaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā*)."<sup>29</sup> If this wrong notion is got rid of, all the existing wrong and pernicious views automatically cease.

The Master's clear injunction to Mogharāja is:

*Suññato lokam avekkhassu—mogharāja sadā sato  
attānudīṭṭhim ūhacca—even maccu taro siyā*

"O Mogharāja, ever mindful, see the world as void—having eradicated the notion of an *ātma*, self (underling it),—so may one overcome death" (Sn.1119).

The doctrine of *anatta* (*anātmā*) is exclusively Buddhistic and is distinguishable from every other religion and philosophy. It is the heart and core of the Buddha's teaching. It was the recognition that this *atta* (*ātma*), self as an illusion, a mirage, that made the Buddha's doctrine so singular and so revolutionary.

All the existing religions do believe in an *atta* (*ātma*), a soul or self and they claim it to be all-powerful, all-pervading, indestructible and permanent. To the believers in a soul (*atta*), soul is a permanent entity that has taken root in all beings.

Some say that this *ātma* spreads throughout the length and breadth of the body like oil in a sesame seed; others say that it surrounds the body in the form of an imperceptible light, which light one perceives when cleansed of all impurities. Still others profess that it is within us, like a gem twinkling in a casket. Still others say it is consciousness, or perception, or sensation, or volition and some conclude that this *ātma* consists of both mind and body—*nāma* and *rūpa*.

Buddhism advocates no such unchanging entity or soul or *ātman*. In conventional usage we speak of a "being," "I," etc., but in the highest sense there exists no "being"; there is no "I" personality. Each one of us is the manifestation of his or her kammic-force, and a composition of nothing but an ever-changing conflux of mind and body. This mind and body separated from each other lose something of their potency and cannot function alone indefinitely. But as a boat and a boatman together cross the stream and, as a lame man mounted on the shoulders of a blind man reach their destination, so mind and body when wedded together function best.

Unceasingly does the mind and its factors change; and just as unceasingly, though at a slower rate, the body alters from moment to moment. The conflux of mind and body goes on as incessantly as the waves of the sea, or as the Buddhist say *nadī soto viya*, like a flowing stream. Thus the "being" or mind and body, *saṃsāra* or procession of



events is utterly free from the notion of a *jīvatma* or *paramātma*, microcosmic soul or macrocosmic soul.

## X. Becoming (*Bhava*)

*Upādāna paccayā bhavo*, “dependent on clinging arises becoming.” Becoming is twofold, and should be understood as two processes: kamma-process (*kamma-bhava*) and kamma-resultant rebirth process (*upapatti-bhava*). *Kamma-bhava* is the accumulated good and evil actions, the “kammically active side of life.” *Upapatti-bhava* is “the kammically passive and morally neutral side of life,” and signifies the kamma-resultant rebirth-process in the next life. The next life may be in any sphere or plane of sentient existence (*kāma-bhava*), that of form (*rūpa-bhava*), or that of formless existence (*arūpa-bhava*).

In the first clause (*avijjā paccayā sankhārā*), *sankhāra* is explained as good and evil actions (*kamma*); if that is so, is it not repetitive to say that *kamma-bhava*, mentioned here, also means good and evil actions? The *paṭicca-samuppāda*, we must know, is concerned not only with the present life but with all the three lives—past, present and future. Kamma or the good and evil actions mentioned in the first clause, belong to the past—and on those past actions the present life depends. The kamma that is referred to here in this clause, *upādāna paccayā bhavo*, belongs to the present life and that in turn causes future life. *Upādāna paccayā bhavo* meaning clinging (*upādāna*) is the condition of the kamma-process, or actions and the kamma-resultant rebirth process.

## XI. Birth (*Jāti*)

*Bhava paccayā jāti*, “dependent on becoming arises birth.” Here birth means not the actual childbirth, but the appearance of the five aggregates (material form, feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness) in the mother’s womb. This process is conditioned by *kamma-bhava*.

The present birth is brought about by the craving and clinging kamma-volitions (*taṇhā-upādāna*) of the past births, and the craving and clinging acts of will of the present birth bring about future rebirth.

According to the teaching of the Buddha, it is this kamma-volition that divides beings into high and low.

"Beings are heirs of their deeds; bearers of their deeds, and their deeds are the womb out of which they spring,"<sup>30</sup> and through their deeds alone they must change for the better, remake themselves, and win liberation from ill.

We are reaping what we have sown in the past; some of our reapings, we know, we have even sown in this life. In the selfsame way, our actions here mould the hereafter, and thus we begin to understand our position in this mysterious universe. If we, through our ignorance, craving and clinging in the long night of samsāric wandering, have not shaped ourselves as we are, how could there be such difference and dissimilarity between living beings as we see in the world today? Can we conceive of a mind, a single mind, vast and confused enough to plan out such a motley sentient world as surrounds us?

Thus kamma is the corollary of rebirth, and rebirth, on the one hand, is the corollary of kamma. Here it may be asked: if kamma is the cause of rebirth and if Buddhism emphatically denies a soul or a transcendental ego, how does this kammic process bring about rebirth?

Well, "No force is ever lost, and there is no reason to think that the force manifest in each being as mind and body is ever lost. It ever undergoes transformations. It is changing now, every moment of our lives. Nor is it lost at death. The vitalizing mind flux is merely reset. It resets in conditions harmonizing with itself, even as broadcast sounds reset in a receiver tuned to the particular wave length. It is the resetting of this vital flux, in fresh conditions, that is called rebirth. Each reborn being starts with a unique set of latent possibilities, the accumulated experiences of the past. That is why character differs, why each endows himself with what theists call 'gifts,' and infinite possibilities."<sup>31</sup> Read "What Is it That is Reborn?" in the chapter on "Buddhist Doctrine of Rebirth" above.

There is nothing that passes or transmigrates from one life to another. Is it not possible to light one lamp from another and in this process does any flame pass from one to the other? Do you not see the



continuity of the flame? It is neither the same flame nor totally a different one.

Kammic process (*kamma-bhava*), therefore, is the force in virtue of which reaction follows actions; it is the energy that, out of a present life, conditions a future life in unending sequence.

“Desire gives rise to deed; deed gives rise to result; result exhibits itself as new corporeality endowed with new desire. Deed is as inevitably followed by result as the body by its shadow. This is merely the universal natural law of conservation of energy extended to the moral domain. As in the universe no energy can ever be lost, so also in the individual nothing can be lost of the resilient force accumulated by desire. This resilient energy is always transmuted into fresh life and we live eternally through our lust to live. The medium, however, that makes all existence possible is kamma.”<sup>32</sup>

## XII. Ageing and Death (*Jarāmaraṇa*)

*Jāti paccayā jarāmaranāṃ*, “dependent on birth arise ageing and death,” and with them naturally come sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Birth is inevitably followed by ageing and death; in the absence of birth there will be no ageing and death. Thus this whole mass of suffering arises dependent on the twelvefold dependent. Ageing and death are followed by birth, and birth, on the other hand, is followed by ageing and death, and the pair thus accompany each other in bewildering succession. Nothing mundane is still; it is all in flux, people build up wishful hopes and plans for the morrow, but one day, sudden perhaps, and unexpected there comes the inevitable hour when death puts an end to this brief span of life, and brings our hopes to naught. So long as man is attached to existence through his ignorance, craving and clinging, to him death is not the final end. He will continue his career of whirling along with the wheel of existence, and will be twisted and torn between the spokes of agony. Thus, looking around us in the world at the different types of men and women about us, and at the differences in their varying fortunes, we know that these cannot be due to any mere chance.

An external power or agency that punishes the ill deeds and rewards the good deeds of beings has no place in Buddhist thought.

Buddhists do not resort to any especially graced person or pray to any imperceptible individual to grant them deliverance. Not even the supreme Buddha could redeem them from *saṃsāra*'s bond. In ourselves lies the power to mould our lives. Buddhists are *kammavādins*, believers in efficacy of actions, good and evil.

According to the teachings of the Buddha, the direct cause of the distinctions and inequalities of birth in this life is the *atītakamma* or good and evil actions of each individual in past lives. In other words each man is reaping what he sowed in the past. In the selfsame way his actions here mould his hereafter.

In all actions, good or evil, mind is the most important factor. "All mental states have mind as their forerunner; mind dominates, everything is mind-made. If one speaks or acts with a polluted mind, pain follows him in consequence as the cartwheel the foot of the beast of burden." In like manner, "in consequence of mentations made, words spoken and deeds done with a pure and placid mind, happiness follows him even as the inseparable shadow."<sup>33</sup>

Man is always changing either for good or for evil. This changing is unavoidable and depends entirely on his own actions and environment.

The world seems to be imperfect and ill-balanced. We are too often confronted with many a difficulty and shortcoming. People differ from one another in many ways and aspects. Among us human beings, let alone the animal kingdom, we see some born as miserable wretches, sunk in deep distress and supremely unhappy; others born into a state of abundance and happiness enjoying a life of luxury and knowing nothing of the world's woe. Again, a chosen few are gifted with keen intellect and great mental capacity while many are wrapped in ignorance. How is it that some of us are blessed with health, beauty, sincere friends and amiable relatives while others are despicable weaklings, destitute and lonely? How is it that some are born to enjoy long life while others pass away in the full bloom of youth? Why are some blessed with affluence, fame and recognition? Why are some chosen few given in full measure all the things which human beings deserve while others are utterly neglected? These are intricate problems that demand a solution.



If we but pause for a moment and impartially investigate and intelligently inquire into things, we will find that these wide differences are not the work of an external agency or a superhuman being. We will find that we ourselves are responsible for our deeds whether good or ill and that we ourselves are the makers of our own kamma.

Says the Buddha:

“According to the seed that is sown,  
So is the fruit ye reap therefrom.  
The doer of good (will gather) good,  
The doer of evil, evil (reaps).  
Sown is the seed and planted well;  
Thou shalt enjoy the fruit thereof.”<sup>34</sup>

It is impossible to conceive of an external agency or some all-powerful being who distributes his gifts to different persons in diverse measures, and who at times showers all his gifts on the same individual. Is it not more rational to say that:

“Who toiled a slave may come anew a prince,  
For gentle worthiness and merit won.  
Who ruled a king may wander earth in rags  
For things done and undone.”

*Light of Asia*

Buddhists do not blame the Buddha or a superhuman being or a deva or an especially graced person for the ills of humanity or praise them for the happiness people experience.

It is knowledge of kamma and *kamma-vipāka*, the law of cause and effect, or moral causation, that urges a true Buddhist to refrain from evil and do good. He who understands cause and effect knows well that it is his own actions and nothing else that make his life miserable or otherwise. He knows that the direct cause of the distinctions and inequalities of birth in this life is the good and evil actions of each individual in past lives and in this life.

Man today is the result of millions of repetitions of thought and action. He is not ready-made; he becomes, and is still becoming. His character is predetermined by his own choice. The thought, the act which he chooses, that by habit he becomes.

It should, however, be remembered that according to Buddhism not everything that occurs is due to past actions. During the time of the Buddha, sectarians like Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, Makkhali-Gosala and others, held the view that whatever the individual experiences, be it pleasant or unpleasant or neither, all come from former actions or past kamma.<sup>35</sup> The Buddha, however, rejected this theory of an exclusive determination by the past (*pubbekatahetu*) as unreasonable. Many a thing is the result of our own deeds done in this present life, and of external causes. Hence it is not true to say that all things that occur are due to past kamma or actions.

Is it not absurd for a student who fails in his examination due to sheer laxity on his part, to attribute the failure to his past kamma? Is it not equally ridiculous for a person to rush about carelessly, bang himself against a stone or some similar thing, and ascribe the mishap to his past actions or kamma? One can multiply such instances to show that not everything is due to actions performed in the past.

But when the causes and conditions of things are destroyed, automatically the effects also cease to be. Sorrow will disappear if the varied rootlets of sorrow's cause are eliminated. A man, for instance, who burns to ashes a mango seed, puts an end to its germinating power and that seed will never produce a mango plant. It is the same with all compounded things (*sankhāra*), animate or inanimate. As kamma is our own manufacture we have the power to break this endless chain, this Wheel of Existence (*bhava cakka*). Referring to those enlightened ones who have conquered themselves through the uprooting of the defilements, the Buddha says in the Ratana Sutta:<sup>36</sup>

"Their past (kamma) is spent, their new (kamma) no more arises, their mind to future becoming is unattached. The germ (of rebirth-consciousness) has died, they have no more desire for re-living. Those wise (steadfast) ones fade out (of existence) as the flame of this lamp." It is said that as the Buddha spoke these words he saw the flame of a lamp go out.

The *paṭicca-samuppāda*, with its twelve links starting with ignorance and ending in ageing and death, shows how man, being fettered, wanders in *saṃsāra* birth after birth. But by getting rid of these twelve factors man can liberate himself from suffering and



rebirth. The Buddha has taught us the way to put an end to this repeated wandering. It is by endeavouring to halt this Wheel of Existence that we may find the way out of this tangle. The Buddha-word which speaks of this cessation of suffering is stated thus:

“Through the entire cessation of ignorance cease volitional formations;

Through the cessation of volitional formations, consciousness;

Through the cessation of consciousness, mentality-materiality;

Through the cessation of mentality-materiality, the sixfold base;

Through the cessation of the sixfold base, contact;

Through the cessation of contact, feeling;

Through the cessation of feeling, craving;

Through the cessation of craving, clinging;

Through the cessation of clinging, becoming;

Through the cessation of becoming, birth;

Through the cessation of birth, cease ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.

Thus does this whole mass of suffering cease.”<sup>37</sup>

Though in Buddhism time is considered as a mere concept (*paññatti*), in the language of the apparent truth (*sammuti sacca*) we speak of three periods of time, and the *paṭicca-samuppāda* formula can be taken as representing three periods of time, namely, the past, the present and the future. The two factors ignorance and volitional formations (*avijjā* and *sankhāra*) belong to the past; the next eight, beginning with consciousness (*viññāṇa*) belong to the present; and the last pair, birth and ageing and death, belong to the future.

In this Wheel of Existence there are then three connecting links (*sandhi*). Between volitional formations (*sankhāra*), the last factor of the past, and consciousness (*viññāṇa*), the first factor of the present, there is one link consisting of past cause and present fruit (*hetu-phala*). Consciousness, mentality-materiality, the sixfold base, contact, and feeling are effects in the present life caused by ignorance and volitional formations of the past. Because of these five factors there come into being three other factors, namely, craving, clinging and becoming which will cause birth in the future. Therefore, between feeling and craving there is another link consisting of present fruit and present

cause (*phala-hetu*). Because of craving, clinging, and becoming of the present, there come into being birth, ageing and death in the future. Therefore, between becoming and birth there is another link. These three links consist of four sections: i. ignorance, volitional formations; ii. consciousness, mentality-materiality, the sixfold base, contact, feeling; iii. craving, clinging, becoming; iv. birth, ageing and death.

“There were five causes in the past,  
And now there is a five-fold fruit,  
There are five causes now as well,  
And in the future fivefold fruit.”<sup>38</sup>

The text mentions ignorance and volitional formations as past causes. “But one who is ignorant, hankers, and hankering, clings, and with his clinging as condition there is becoming, therefore craving, clinging and becoming are included as well. Hence it is said: ‘In the previous kamma-process becoming, there is delusion, which is ignorance; there is accumulation, which is formations; there is attachment, which is craving; there is embracing, which is clinging; there is volition, which is becoming; thus these five things in the previous kamma-process becoming are conditions for rebirth-linking here (in the present becoming).’”<sup>39</sup>

Now the fivefold fruit in the present life as given in the text is represented by five factors: consciousness, mentality-materiality, the sixfold base, contact, feeling.

There are five causes we now produce, of which the text gives only craving, clinging and becoming; “But when becoming is included, the formations that precede it or that are associated with it are included too. And by including craving and clinging, the ignorance associated with them, deluded by which a man performs kamma, is included too. So they are five.”

Fivefold fruit we reap in the future. This is represented by consciousness, mentality-materiality, the sixfold base, contact, feeling. The text gives also birth and ageing and death as the future fivefold fruit. Birth really is represented by these five beginning with consciousness and ending in feeling. Ageing and death is the ageing and death of these five.



On close analysis, it becomes clear that in this dependent arising, *paṭicca-samuppāda*, in this repeated process of rebirth, in this cycle of existence, there is nothing permanent, nothing of the kind of an enduring soul-entity that passes from one birth to the next. All *dhammas* are causally dependent, they are conditioned (*sabbe dhammā paṭiccasamuppannā*), and this process of events is utterly free from the notion of a permanent soul or self.

The Buddha declares: "To believe the doer of the deed will be the same as the one who experiences its results (in the next life), this is the one extreme. To believe that the doer of the deed, and the one who experiences its results, are two different persons, this is the other extreme. Both these extremes the Tathāgata, the Perfect One, has avoided and taught the truth that lies in the middle of both, to wit: "Through ignorance conditioned are the kamma formations and so on (see formula). Thus arises this whole mass of suffering."

Hence the ancients said:

"There is no doer of a deed  
Or one who reaps the deed's result;  
Phenomena alone flow on—  
No other view than this is right.

For here there is no Brāhma God,  
Creator of the round of births;  
Phenomena alone flow on—  
Cause and component their condition."<sup>40</sup>

In concluding this essay on dependent arising, a confusion that may arise in the reader's mind should be forestalled. If according to dependent arising things are determined by conditions, one may be inclined to think that the Buddha encouraged fatalism or determinism, and that human freedom and free will are put aside.

But what is fatalism? According to the *Dictionary of Philosophy*, "Fatalism is determinism, especially in its theological form which asserts that *all human activities are predetermined by God.*" Determinism, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is the philosophical doctrine that human action is not free but necessarily determined by motives, which are regarded as external forces acting

upon the will." The doctrine of kamma refutes that. A clear understanding of Buddhism shows that the Buddha never subscribed to the theory that all things are unalterably fixed, that all things happen by inevitable necessity—that is strict determinism (*niyati vāda*), nor did he uphold the theory of complete indeterminism (*adhicca-samuppāna*). Everywhere we see certain laws and conditions functioning, and one of these is *cetanā* or volition, which is kamma. There is no law giver, no external agency to interfere with the mental and material happenings. Through causes and conditions things come to be.

Thus is this endless play of action and reaction kept in perpetual motion by kamma, concealed by ignorance, and propelled by craving. In no way does this affect the freedom of the will and the responsibility of man for his acts (his kamma).

Lastly a word about "free will": will is not something static. It is not a positive entity, or a self-existent thing. Will is quite momentary like any other mental state; there is, therefore, no "will" as a "thing" to be either free or not free. The truth is that "will" is conditioned and a passing phenomenon.

To the genuine Buddhist the primary concern of life is not mere speculation, or vain voyages into the imaginary regions of high fantasy, but the gaining of true happiness and freedom from all suffering. *Paṭicca-samuppāda*, which speaks of suffering (*dukkha*), and the cessation of suffering, is the central concept of Buddhism, and represents the finest flower of Indian thought.

### **Paṭicca-Samuppāda (*anuloma*)**

**Dependent Arising (in direct order; the arising)**

- i-ii. Avijjā-paccayā sankhārā
- ii-iii. Sankhāra-paccayā viññāṇam
- iii-iv. Viññāṇa-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ
- iv-v. Nāma-rūpa-paccayā salāyatanaṃ
- v-vi. Salāyatana-paccayā phasso
- vi-vii. Phassa-paccayā vedanā
- vii-viii. Vedanā-paccayā taṇhā
- viii-ix. Taṇhā-paccayā upādānaṃ
- ix-x. Upādāna-paccayā bhavo



- x-xi. Bhava-paccayā jāti  
 xi-xii. Jāti-paccayā jarā-maranam soka-parideva-dukkha-  
 domanassupāyāsā sambhavanti. evametassa kevalassa  
 dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.

### Paṭicca - Samuppāda (*paṭiloma*)

#### Dependent Arising (the ceasing)

- i-ii. Avijjāyatveva asesavirāga-nirodhā sankhāra-nirodho  
 ii-iii. Sankhāra-nirodhā viññāṇa-nirodho  
 iii-iv. Viññāṇa-nirodhā nāma-rūpa-nirodho  
 iv-v. Nāma-rūpa-nirodhā salāyatana-nirodho  
 v-vi. Salāyatana-nirodhā phassa-nirodho  
 vi-vii. Phassa-nirodhā vedanā-nirodho  
 vii-viii. Vedanā-nirodhā taṇhā-nirodho  
 viii-ix. Taṇhā-nirodhā upādāna-nirodho  
 ix-x. Upādāna-nirodhā bhava-nirodho  
 x-xi. Bhava-nirodhā jāti-nirodho  
 xi-xii. Jāti-nirodhā jarā-maranam soka-parideva-dukkha-  
 domanassupāyāsā nirujjhanti. Evametassa kevalassa  
 dukkhakkhandhassanirodho hoti.

(Samyutta Nikāya, ii, 1)

### TRANSLATION

#### The Arising of the Wheel of Existence

- i-ii. Dependent on ignorance (*avijjā*) arise volitional or mental formations (*sankhāra*).  
 ii-iii. Dependent on volitional formations (*sankhāra*) arises re-linking or rebirth consciousness (*viññāṇa*).  
 iii-iv. Dependent on consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arise mentality-materiality (*nāma-rūpa*).  
 iv-v. Dependent on mentality-materiality (*nāma-rūpa*) arise the sixfold base (*salāyatana*).  
 v-vi. Dependent on the sixfold base (*salāyatana*) arises contact (*phassa*).  
 vii-vii. Dependent on contact (*phassa*) arises feeling (*vedanā*).  
 vii-viii. Dependent on feeling (*vedanā*) arises craving (*taṇhā*).

- viii-ix. Dependent on craving (*taṇhā*) arises clinging (*upādāna*).
- ix-x. Dependent on clinging (*upādāna*) arises becoming (*bhavo*).
- x-xi. Dependent on becoming (*bhava*) arises birth (*jāti*).
- xi-xii. Dependent on birth (*jāti*) arise ageing and death (*jarā-maraṇa*), and sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. Thus there is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

### The Cessation of the Wheel of Existence

- i-ii. Though the entire cessation of this ignorance, volitional formations cease.
- ii-iii. Through the cessation of volitional formations, rebirth consciousness ceases.
- iii-iv. Through the cessation of rebirth consciousness, mentality-materiality cease.
- iv-v. Through the cessation of mentality-materiality, the sixfold base ceases.
- v-vi. Through the cessation of the sixfold base, contact ceases.
- vi-vii. Through the cessation of contact, feeling ceases.
- vii-viii. Through the cessation of feeling, craving ceases.
- viii-ix. Through the cessation of craving, clinging ceases.
- ix-x. Through the cessation of becoming, birth ceases.
- xi-xii. Through the cessation of birth, ageing and death cease, and sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. Thus there is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

### Notes

1. Mahā Nidāna Sutta, D.15.
2. Anamatagga Samyutta, S. ii, 179.
3. A. iv, 77.
4. Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means* (London: 1945), pp.14-15.
5. Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian* (London: 1958), p. 4.
6. Viscount Samuel, *Belief and Action* (London: Penguin Books, 1939), p.16.
7. Vin.I, Mahāvagga.
8. The entire formula consisting of the twelve factors is found at the end of this essay.
9. Generally the two Pali words *anuloma* and *paṭiloma* are translated as "direct order" and "reverse order." However, it is not quite correct to say "reverse



order," for it means from the end towards the beginning or in the opposite order. Both the arising and the ceasing of the factors of dependent arising are from beginning to end. For instance, with the arising of ignorance arise volitional formations and so on. With the ceasing of ignorance cease volitional formations, and so on.

10. Ud. 1.
11. Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, Vinaya i, S.v. 420.
12. A. i, 176.
13. M.79/II, 32.
14. Eddington, *The Philosophy of Physical Science* (Cambridge University Press, 1939).
15. D. ii, 90; S.v, 430; Vin.i, 229.
16. M. 106.
17. M.38/I 265-266.
18. *Lankavatāra Sūtra*.
19. M. 38.
20. Nyanātiloka, *Fundamentals of Buddhism* (Colombo:1949), p.67.
21. *Ibid.*, p.65.
22. Madhupindika Sutta, M.18, and Mahātanhāsankhaya Sutta, M.38.
23. Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, Vinaya i; S.v. 420.
24. D.22/II, 308-309.
25. Dh.p. vv, 216.
26. Sn. v, 61.
27. Vinaya Mahavagga, Khandaka. For details see *The Buddha's Ancient Path*, Thera Piyadassi (BPS, Fifth Edition, 1987), p.163.
28. Dh.p. vv, 153, 154.
29. M. 22/I, 138.
30. M. 135/III, 203.
31. Dr. Cassius A. Pereira (later Kassapa Thera), "What I Believe?" *Ceylon Observer*, October 1937.
32. Paul Dahlke, *Buddhist Essays* (London:1908), p.115.
33. Dh.p. vv, 1, 2.
34. S. i, 227; *The Kindred Sayings*, I. p.293.
35. M. 101; D.2. This view is examined at A. i, 137.
36. Sn. v, 235.
37. A. i, 176.
38. *The Path of Purification*, trans. by Nanamoli (Kandy:BPS), p.669.
39. *Ibid.*, p.67.
40. *Ibid.*, p.701.

## The Psychological Aspect of Buddhism

What the Buddha taught during a period of forty-five years is so vast, its aspects so varied and fascinating, that scholars have called Buddhism a religion; a philosophy; an ethical code; a religio-philosophical system; and ethical idealism. But one has yet to find a religion in which psychology looms so large as in Buddhism. The commonly called academical psychology—like other academical sciences—defines mind in static terms, whereas Buddhist psychology defines mental life in dynamic terms. However, after many struggles and persistent efforts, modern psychology has finally left the dilapidated abode of orthodox schools, and is rediscovering the old doctrine of a dynamic mind. There are some variations no doubt, but the basic principle is one. Today many psychologists accept the dynamic nature of the human mind, and modern textbooks of psychology have abandoned the science of human behaviour.

To the Buddha even the question of religion and its origin is not a metaphysical one, but a psychological and intellectual one. The Buddha was not ready to answer such questions as: Is the world eternal or not? Is it finite or infinite? Has the world an end or not? What is the origin of the world? At such times the Buddha was silent to such seemingly important but futile questions, because silence was the best answer to such speculations and meaningless questions. The only way to resolve these doubts and difficulties is by exploring the innermost recesses of the human mind which can only be effected by deep self-introspection based on purity of conduct and consequent meditation.

All the principal tenets of Buddhism like the doctrine of kamma, volitional activities or moral causation, and rebirth, meditation and the resultant mental attainments, are best studied and investigated as workings of the human mind, and therefore, Buddhism can most fittingly be described as a study of the highest psychology.



The Abhidhamma Piṭaka of the Buddhist Canon gives a comprehensive account of the mind and the mental factors in a manner so as to help the Buddhist way of life. However, a close study of the dialogues, or the discourses of the Buddha, tends to produce the conviction that psychology plays a significant role in the Sutta Piṭaka, too. What the Buddha had to say with regard to the nature of the human mind, the method of cleansing it, and the art of becoming its master and not its slave, is clearly enunciated in the discourses of the Sutta Piṭaka. In this respect the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (The Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness),<sup>1</sup> the Vitakka Saṅṭhāna Sutta (The Removal of Distracting Thoughts)<sup>2</sup> and such other cardinal discourses are striking examples.

Buddhism is the most psychological of religions. It is significant that the intricate workings of the human mind are more fully dealt with in Buddhism than in any other religion, and therefore, psychology works hand in hand with Buddhism more than with any other religion.

Is Buddhism related to modern psychology? one may ask. Yes, but with some difference. Buddhism is more concerned with the curative than the analytic. Buddhism helps us to get beyond the intellect to the actual experience of life itself.

Through meditation the Buddha had discovered the deeper universal maladies of the human heart and mind. The remarkable insight into the workings of the mind makes the Buddha a psychologist and scientist of the highest eminence. Admittedly his way of arriving at these truths of mental life is not that of an experimentalist, yet what the Buddha had discovered remains true, and in fact has been corroborated by the experimentalist. But the purpose in engaging in these inquiries is quite different from that of the scientist.

The statements of the Buddha about the nature of the mind and matter are directed towards specific ends. They are simply the deliverance of the individual, supreme security from bondage.

The Buddha places so much emphasis on mind and mental phenomena because of the crucial role that our inner life occupies in the genesis of human action. In theistic religions the basis is God. In Buddhism, which is non-theistic, the mind is the basis.

The Christian Bible begins by saying, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth," whereas in the *Dhammapada*, the opening lines read: "*Mano pubbangamā dhammā mano setthā manomayā*," "Mind precedes things; mind dominates them; mind creates them." The words of the Christian God, as a matter of fact, the words of Gods of all theistic religions, point the way to God and heaven, to the Beyond. The Buddha gives the greatest importance to mind in the scheme of deliverance, directs people to the ways of discrimination and research, and urges them to get busy with the real task of developing the inner forces and qualities of the mind. The Buddha says: "You yourselves should put forth the necessary effort, and work out your deliverance; the Buddhas only show the way."<sup>3</sup>

In order to understand fully the ideal of freedom of the mind, it is necessary to appreciate the importance of the mind. If there is no proper understanding of the importance of the human mind, we cannot appreciate to its fullest extent the reason why it is so necessary to develop and safeguard the freedom of the mind.

Of all forces, the force of the mind is the most potent. It predominates every other force. It is a power by itself and within itself. Any attempt to thwart the growth of this force is a step in the wrong direction. No one has understood the power of the mind as clearly as the Buddha.

Buddhism, while not denying the world of matter and the great effect that the physical world has on mental life, emphasises the very great importance of the human mind. Once a monk asked the Buddha: "Venerable sir, by what is the world led? By what is the world drawn along? Under the sway of what one Dhamma have all gone?" The Buddha's answer is categorical: "*Well, monk, the world is led by mind (thought); by mind the world is drawn along; all have gone under the sway of the mind, the one Dhamma.*"<sup>4</sup> The Buddhist point of view is that the mind or consciousness is the core of our existence. All our psychological experiences, such as pain and pleasure, sorrow and happiness, good and evil, life and death are not attributed to any external agency. They are the results of our own thoughts and their resultant actions.



The Buddhist way of life is an intense process of cleansing one's speech, action and thought. It is self-development and self-purification resulting in self-realization. The emphasis is on practical results and not on mere philosophical speculation, logical abstraction or even mere cogitation. Buddhist ethos and psychology is built on the eternal truth of *dukkha*, the unsatisfactoriness of all sentient beings, all empirical existence. The Buddha said:

"One thing only do I teach  
Suffering and its end to reach."<sup>5</sup>

To understand this unequivocal saying is to understand Buddhism; for the entire teaching of the Buddha is nothing else than the application of this one principle. What can be called the discovery of a Buddha is just the Four Noble Truths: namely, *dukkha*, the arising or the cause of *dukkha*, the cessation of *dukkha*, and the path leading to the cessation of *dukkha*. And the rest are logical developments and more detailed explanations of the four truths. "This is the typical teaching of the Buddhas of all ages."<sup>6</sup>

The Buddha was a practical teacher. To those who listened to him, he explained in detail the problem of *dukkha*, the universal fact of life, and tried to make people feel its full force. He had definitely told us what he explains and what he does not. To one who views the world and all it holds in its proper perspective, the primary concern of life is not mere speculation or vain voyaging into the imaginary regions of high fantasy, but the gaining of true happiness and freedom from *dukkha*, unsatisfactoriness. To him true knowledge depends on the central question: Can this learning be of use to us in the conquest of mental peace and tranquillity, of real happiness? The Buddha says: "*In this very body, a fathom long, with its consciousness and perception I declare are the world, its arising, its cessation and the path that leads to the cessation of the world.*" Here the word "world" denotes *dukkha* (A.ii. 48).

According to his teaching, suffering cannot be separated from the five aggregates, from this fathom long body with a mind. The five aggregates and suffering are the same, and not two different things. "What is suffering?" Buddha asks, and answers: "It should be said that it is the five aggregates of clinging."<sup>7</sup>

Every brand of suffering does one undergo through rebirth in the diverse planes of becoming. And there is nothing in the world but suffering to one who sees life aright; for everything, including the highest and most intense form of pleasant sensuous experience, is impermanent, fleeting, passing away. Therefore did the Buddha declare: "All that is experienced is suffering." (*Yamkiṃci vedayitāṃ sabbāṃ taṃ dukkhasmimīti vadāmi.*)

Now it becomes clear that to understand the first truth, *dukkha*, as well as the other three truths, it is essential to have a clear idea of the five aggregates that comprise a being. In ordinary parlance we speak of a "being"; but in the ultimate sense there is no such "being"; there is only a manifestation of ever-changing psycho-physical forces or energies. These forces or energies form the aggregates, and what we call a being is nothing but a combination of these everchanging five aggregates. Now what are the five aggregates?

According to Buddhism man is a psycho-physical combination of mind and body (*nāma-rūpa*). The components of the "mind" are classified into four groups, namely: feeling (*vedanā*); perceptions, that is sense-impressions, images or ideas and concepts (*saññā*); mental formations or conative ideas and their concomitants (*sankhāra*); and consciousness, (*viññāṇā*). These four mental groups which are the non-physical factors in man are collectively regarded as mind (*nāma*). With the physical factor body (*rūpa*), the so-called being comes to be known as the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) composing an individuality.

In our study of psychology, Buddhist or otherwise, we feel obliged to ask whether the mind and the brain are different from each other. It is true that there is a close connection between mind and brain. Mental actions are related to brain charges. Mind is not something that can be handled, that can be submitted to any chemical test. It is invisible, intangible and as such cannot be discerned by the five senses. It lies outside the realm of the physical world; we can, however, form some idea of its nature and structure and how it works as a whole. But the brain is otherwise. We can speak of its actual position, its structure and also its function.



The mind, while not impervious to external influences, is not under the control of other factors, but it is the master of them. It is with a man's mind that he seeks truth, that he probes into the inner meaning of things, by which he learns their secret and significance.

In brief, matter, the physical body of man, contains and comprises the four great primaries (*cattāri mahābhūtāni*) which are traditionally known as solidity, fluidity, heat or temperature, and motion or vibration (*paṭhavi, āpo, tejo, vāyo*). In this context, they are not simply earth, water, fire and wind, though conventionally they may be so called. In Buddhist thought, especially in the Abhidhamma teaching, they are more than that. Very briefly *paṭhavi* or solidity is the element of expansion. *Āpo*, fluidity is the element of cohesion. *Tejo* is the element of heat or temperature. *Vāyo* is the element of motion, it is displacement. Every material object is made up of the Four Great Primaries though one or other seems to preponderate.

As discussed earlier, the four non-physical factors of man, all his mental and emotional processes, are included in the word, "mind." Students of Buddhism are familiar with the three Pali terms: *mano*, *citta* and *viññāṇa*. These terms are often translated as mind in some context or other, although a more discriminating student will translate *viññāṇa* as consciousness or cognitive consciousness. The English word "mind" does not adequately convey the meaning of the Pali words *mano* or *citta*. These three terms, *mano*, *citta* and *viññāṇa*, however, are synonyms (*yaṃ ca kho bhikkhave vuccati cittaṃ itipi mano itipi viññāṇaṃ*)<sup>8</sup> yet have their distinct and special uses in certain contexts and with all their different shades of meaning they indicate the psychological aspects of Buddhism.

The term *viññāṇa* has a deeper connotation in Buddhist psychology. In Western psychology, mind is generally defined as: "The organised totality of psychical structures and processes, conscious, unconscious and endopsychic philosophically, rather than psychologically, the entity or substratum underlying these structures and processes."<sup>9</sup> According to philosophy: "Mind is used in two principal senses: (a) the individual mind is the self or subject which perceives, remembers, imagines, feels, conceives, reasons, wills, etc. and which is functionally related to an individual bodily organism; (b) mind,

generically considered, is a metaphysical substance which pervades all individual mind and which is contrasted with matter or material substance."<sup>10</sup>

Let us now discuss the four aggregates *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra* and *viññāṇa* which form the psychical parts of the mind.

*Vedanā* is the aggregate of feeling which accompanies our impressions and ideas. Feelings are threefold: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. They are dependent on contact. Seeing a form or visible object, hearing a sound, smelling an odour, tasting a flavour, touching some tangible thing, cognizing a mental object (an idea or thought), man experiences feeling. These six kinds of feelings are experienced through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and the mind, respectively, (the faculty of mind, *manindriya*, is regarded as the sixth faculty in Buddhist psychology). When, for instance, eye, form, and visual consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*) come together, it is their coincidence that is called contact. Contact means the combination of the organ of sense, the object of sense, and sense consciousness. When these are all present together there is no power or force that can prevent the arising of feeling.

Next comes the aggregate of perception (*saññākkhandha*). The function of perception in Buddhist psychology is recognition (*saṃjānana*) of objects, both physical and mental. Perception, like feeling, is also sixfold: perception of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily contacts and mental objects. Extra-sensory forms of perception such as telepathy and clairvoyance are also included in the aggregate of perception.

There is a certain affinity between awareness (*viñānana*), which is the function of consciousness, and recognition (*saṃjānana*), the function of perception. While consciousness becomes aware of an object, simultaneously perception takes the distinctive mark of the object and thus distinguishes it from other objects. This distinctive mark is instrumental in cognizing the object a second and a third time, and in fact, every time we become aware of the object. Thus it is perception, *saññā*, that brings about memory.

It is important to note that perceptions often deceive us. Then they become known as illusion or perversity of perceptions



(*saññā vipallāsa*). It is always when we fail to see the true nature of things that our views become clouded; because of our preconceived notions, our attachment and aversion, our likes and dislikes (*anurodha*, *virodha*),<sup>11</sup> we fail to see the sense organs and sense objects in their respective and objective natures, and go after images and deceptions. The sense organs delude and mislead us, and then we fail to see things in their true light, in their proper perspective, so our way of seeing things becomes perverted (*viparīta dassana*). Right understanding alone removes these illusions and helps man to cognize the real nature that underlies all appearances. It is only when man comes out of this cloud of illusions and perversions that he shines with true wisdom like the full moon that emerges brilliant from behind a black cloud.

When a particular perception, perverted or not, occurs frequently, it grows stronger and grips our mind. Then it becomes difficult to get rid of that perception, and the result is well explained in this verse of the Sutta Nipata (v. 847):

“Who is free from sense perceptions  
In him no more bonds exist;  
Who by insight freedom gains  
All delusions cease in him;

But who clings to sense perceptions  
And to viewpoints wrong and false  
He lives wrangling in this world.”

Perception is followed by the aggregate of mental (volitional) formations (*sankhārakkhandha*). It is good to keep in mind that mental or volitional formations is the popular term for the word *sankhāra* in the list of the five aggregates. In other contexts *sankhāra* does signify anything conditioned and compounded. In the statements “*sabbe sankhārā aniccā*” or “*aniccā vata sankhārā*” (“all compounded things are impermanent”), the term *sankhāra* applies to all compounded and conditioned things, i.e., all things that come into being as the effect of causes and conditions and which themselves act as causes and conditions in turn again to give rise to other effects.

In this group of mental formations (*sankhāra*) are included all mental factors except feeling (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*)

mentioned earlier. The Abhidhamma speaks of fifty-two mental concomitants or factors (*cetasika*). Feeling and perceptions are two of them, but they are not volitional formations. The remaining fifty are collectively known as *sankhāra*, mental or volitional formations. Volition plays a vital role in the mental realm, and we shall discuss this when we deal with the psychology of kamma.

The aggregate of consciousness (*viññāṇakkhandha*) is the most important of the five aggregates which comprise man. Now what is the function of consciousness? Like feeling, perception and volitional formations, consciousness also has six types and its function is varied. It has its basis and objects.

All our feelings are experienced through the contact of sense faculties with the external world. The faculty of mind which cognizes mental objects is not something tangible and perceptible like the other five faculties which cognize the external world. The eye cognizes the world of colours (*vaṇṇa*) or visible objects, the ear audible sounds, and so forth. The mind, however, cognizes the world of ideas and thoughts. When it comes to the world of thoughts and ideas, the faculty of the mind is lord over the mental realm. The eye cannot think thoughts, and collect ideas, but it is instrumental in seeing visible forms, the world of colours.

It is very important to understand the function of consciousness. Although there is this functional relationship between the faculties and their objects, for instance, eye with forms, ear with sounds, and so forth, awareness comes through consciousness. In other words, sense objects cannot be experienced with particular sensitivity without the appropriate kind of consciousness. When the three things: eye, form and visual consciousness come together, it is their coincidence that is called contact. From contact comes feeling and so on as explained in the dependent arising or conditioned genesis (*paṭicca-samuppāda*, see above p.154).

When it is said that consciousness arises through the interaction of the sense organs and objects (*indriya* and *ārammana*), it does not mean that consciousness is something created by the sense organ and object which are purely physical. Otherwise we will be subscribing to the theory of the materialistic schools which believed that



consciousness is a mere by-product of matter. The function of *viññāṇa*, consciousness, is to become aware of objects (*vijāṇana*). The human eye may come in contact with the visible object, but unless there is awareness we are not conscious of the object. Consciousness also is conditioned and subject to change, and so it is not a spirit or soul opposed to matter, nor a projection, an offspring of matter.

The concept of *viññāṇa* occupies a very high place in teachings of the Buddha, but it is not studied or understood by many in all its aspects; it is the least understood. To many, *viññāṇa* is just one of the five aggregates which becomes aware of sense objects. Its deeper interpretation, the broader aspects involved, are ignored. When we discuss the concept of *viññāṇa* in relation to the doctrine of survival or the rebirth process of beings, it becomes clear that consciousness plays an important role in the process of becoming (*punabbhava*).

This fact is clearly brought out in the *paṭicca-samuppāda*: *sankhāra paccayā viññāṇam*, dependent on the kamma or good and evil actions (*sankhāra*) of the past births is conditioned the conscious life in this present birth. Consciousness, therefore, is the first factor (*nidāna*) or first of the conditioning links belonging to the present existence. As this consciousness or *viññāṇa* is the first of the stream of consciousness (*viññāṇa-sota*) belonging to one single existence (*bhava*), it is also known as *paṭisandhi viññāṇa*, relinking or rebirth consciousness. *Sankhāra* means kamma, good and evil actions, all actions, physical, verbal and mental (*kāya-sankhāra*, *vacī-sankhāra*, *citta-sankhāra*) which will bring out reactions giving rise to rebirth. Thus *sankhāra* determines that part of consciousness in the next life influencing the new personality.

What we call life here is the functioning of the five aggregates which we have already discussed, or the functioning of mind and body (*nāma-rūpa*) which are only energies or forces. They are never the same for two consecutive moments, and in this conflux of mind and body we do not see anything permanent. The grown-up man is neither the child nor quite a different person; there is only a relationship of continuity. The conflux of mind and body, or mental and physical energy, is not lost at death, for no force or energy is ever lost. It undergoes change. It resets, reforms in new conditions. This is called rebirth, re-existence or rebecoming (*punabbhava*). Kammic process

(*kammabhava*) is the energy that out of a present life conditions a future life in unending sequence. In this process there is nothing that passes or transmigrates from one life to another. It is only a movement that continues unbroken. The "being" who passes away here and takes birth elsewhere is neither the same person, nor a totally different one (*na ca so na ca añño*).<sup>12</sup>

There is the last moment of consciousness (*cuti viññāṇa* or *cuti citta*) belonging to the immediately previous life; immediately next, upon the cessation of that consciousness, but conditioned by it, there arises the first moment of consciousness of the present birth which is called (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) relinking or rebirth consciousness, the first stirring of mental life in the newly begun being. Similarly, the last thought moment in this life conditions the first thought moment in the next life. In this way consciousness comes into being and passes away yielding place to new consciousness. Thus the perpetual stream of consciousness (*viññāṇa sota*) goes on until existence ceases through the eradication of the root causes leading to becoming or existence (*bhava*). The root causes are: lust, hate and delusion (*rāga, dosa, moha*). Existence, in a way, is consciousness, the will to live.

The Pāli word *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* is a term found only in the Abhidhamma literature, and a detailed account of the term is found in the commentaries and treatises on the Abhidhamma. *Paṭisandhi* literally means re-linking, re-uniting, re-joining. It is called reuniting, through its being the thing which links one existence to another, the succeeding one.<sup>13</sup> (See above p.151.)

It is interesting to note that the counterpart of the Abhidhamma term "*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*" is found in the Sutta Piṭaka. In the Anenjasappāya Sutta (106) of the Majjhima Nikāya, this *vipāka-viññāṇa* is referred to as the *saṃvattanikaṃ viññāṇaṃ*, the consciousness that goes on, that links on, that proceeds from one life to another as *vipāka*, the consciousness that evolves into the next life. But be it noted that this consciousness is not an unchanging entity. Dependent on consciousness arises mentality-materiality (*nāma-rūpa*), the psycho-physical personality. Consciousness, on the other hand, is conditioned by mentality-materiality (*nāma-rūpa paccayā viññāṇaṃ, viññāṇa paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*).<sup>14</sup> They are mutually dependent and



the two together form a new being. In the Mahā Nidāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya the question was raised by the Buddha in the course of a discussion with his attendant disciple Ānanda Thera as to whether *nāma-rūpa* will develop and grow into maturity if *viññāṇa* were not to descend into the mother's womb (*mātukucchimhi na okkamissatha*), or being entered into the mother's womb were to leave (*okkamitvā vakkamissatha*). Ānanda Thera's reply was in the negative: "Lord, the development of the embryo will not be successful." The answer was approved by the Buddha.

As the Mahātanhāsankhaya Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya points out, a conception (*gabbhassa avakkanti*) of a being takes place by the conjunction of three factors. If the mother and father come together (there should be coitus of parents), and it is the mother's proper season (the mother should be fertile), and the *gandhabba* is also present (*paccupaṭṭhito hoti*), then a germ of life is planted. (See above p.123.)

The third factor, *gandhabba*, is simply a term for the *viññāṇa*, or *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*, or the *saṃvattanika-viññāṇa*, rebirth consciousness. According to Ācariya Buddhaghosa, the Commentator, *gandhabba* means the being about to enter the womb (*paccupaṭṭhito hoti*). What is meant is that a *satta*, a being, about to be born in that situation, is being driven on by the mechanism of kamma. It should be clearly understood that this *gandhabba* is neither a "semi-god who presides over child-conception"<sup>15</sup> nor a "discarnate spirit" as implied by the Vedic *gandharva*. It is the *viññāṇa* conditioned by *sankhāras* or kamma formations, that brings about the rebirth of an individual after his death. (See above p.150.)

Consciousness, which is the psychic factor that determines the rebirth of an individual or being, is not something permanent in the form of a self or soul or an ego-entity. Even consciousness is conditioned and subject to change. There were many during the time of the Buddha who thought, and there are many who continue to think, that consciousness in the form of a permanent, enduring self or soul exists in man, continues through life, and at death transmigrates from one life to another, and binds life together. During the Buddha's time some metaphysicians held the view: "Whatever there is to be called *citta* or *mano* or *viññāṇa*, that is the soul, permanent, constant, eternal, unchanging."<sup>16</sup>

We also see a clear instance of this in the thirty-eighth discourse of the Majjhima Nikāya. One of the Buddha's own disciples, Sāti by name, held the following view: "In so far as I understand the Dhamma taught by the Buddha, it is the same consciousness, *viññāṇa* that fares on and continues (*sandhāvati saṃsarati*) that transmigrates and wanders about (in rebirth)." When Sāti intimated his point of view to the Buddha, the Master questioned him: "What is this consciousness, Sāti?" "It is that which expresses, which feels and experiences (*vado vedeyyo*) the result of good and evil deeds now here now there." The Buddha, however, dispelled his erroneous belief by explaining to him that apart from conditions there is no arising of consciousness, that consciousness arises depending on conditions.

Sāti erred when he said that the same consciousness continues as speaker and experiencer thus regarding consciousness as an agent behind all mental activities. (For details see above p.148.)

Now this consciousness referred to as the stream of consciousness (*viññāṇa sota*)<sup>17</sup> is not a unity that abides unchanged, and continues in the same state without perishing throughout the cycle of existence. Consciousness also is conditioned, and therefore, is not permanent. It does not, as Sāti thought, transmigrate from one life to another.

The eminent American psychologist, Willim James, only echoes the words of the Buddha when he writes referring to consciousness: "It is nothing jointed. It flows. A 'river' or 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described ... *Let us call it the stream of thoughts, the stream of consciousness or of subjective life.*"<sup>18</sup> (The italics are his.)

A passing reference to the *bhavāṅga* aspect of Buddhist psychology is needed. *Bhavāṅga-citta* or *bhavāṅga-sota* plays an important role in the mental life of a being.

Modern psychology postulates three levels of the mind: the conscious, the subconscious, the unconscious. The conscious level is one of awareness. During our waking life the conscious mind works though the five channels known as the five sense faculties.



The subconscious stratum of the mind is the area which holds those memories that we can recall at will. It is said that the subconscious level of mental life which lies immediately below that of the conscious is a repository of memories which can be brought back into consciousness at will. The level of the unconscious is a store-house for all past experiences that cannot be recalled at will, but can, at times, on its own, manifest itself in the conscious level without any external stimulation, or under such special methods as hypnosis.

Sigmund Freud, who was chiefly concerned with the unconscious mind as the store-house of mental causes for a nervous breakdown, gives in *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* numerous examples of the fact of unconscious activity. Though some local scholars identify the *bhavāṅga-citta* with the subconscious or unconscious mind, there is not a complete parallel. In Buddhist psychology there are no such levels of consciousness. Abhidhamma speaks of two types of mind: the *vīthi-citta* and *bhavāṅga-citta*. *Vīthi-citta* is a thought process which occurs always at conscious level, that is during waking life. It works through the five sense faculties. The *bhavāṅga-citta* operates during waking life as well as in the dreamless state of deep sleep, and therefore, it may be said that it functions below the level of consciousness. It can also be called a subconscious or an unconscious mental process but not identical with the full range of the Western concept of the subconscious or unconscious mind. It does not cover the entire ground of the Western conception of the subconscious or unconscious mind.

The *bhavāṅga*, which is made up of "*bhava*" (becoming or existence) and "*aṅga*" (cause or instrumental, rather than factor), is an essential condition for continued existence. "Life continuum" is the closest English equivalent for the Pali word *bhavāṅga*, by reason of the existence of the *bhavāṅga-citta*, the stream of consciousness is kept going without interruption.

If our present birth here is the beginning, and our death is the end of this life, there is hardly any need to worry, or try to understand from a psychological point of view the problem of *dukkha*, the unsatisfactoriness of all empirical existence. A moral order in the universe, the

reality of right and wrong, may not be of any practical significance to us. To enjoy and gratify the senses at any cost may seem to be the sensible thing to do during this brief span of life. This view, however, does not explain the inequality of humanity. An inquiring mind will always strive to seek the cause of this inequality.

There are two principal teachings of the Buddha which should be studied from a psychological point of view. They are kamma and rebirth. Kamma is the law of moral causation that shapes the destiny of beings and brings about rebirth. Basically it is volition (*cetanā*), action prompted by will. The Buddha says: "Volition, O monks, I declare is kamma, having willed man acts by deed, word and thought."<sup>19</sup> Volition, which is will is the deciding factor in all our activities, good or ill. Kamma is the action or seed. The reaction, the effect, or fruit is known as *kamma-vipāka*. Volition may be good or bad, so actions may be wholesome or unwholesome according to their results. This endless play of action and reaction, cause and effect, seed and fruit, continues in perpetual motion, and this is becoming (*bhava*) — a continually changing process of the psycho-physical phenomena of existence discussed earlier.

Man acts through body, speech and mind; actions bring about reactions. Craving (*taṇhā*), our thirst, which is a factor of the mind, gives rise to deeds, deeds produce results; results in turn bring about new desires, new craving and thirsting. The process of cause and effect, actions and reactions, is natural law. It is a law in itself with no need for a law giver. An external agency that rewards and punishes the good and evil deeds of man has no place in Buddhist thought. Man is always changing either for good or for ill. This changing is unavoidable and depends entirely on his own will and action. This is merely the universal natural law of the conservation of energy extended to the moral domain.

It may be observed, from a psychological point of view, that Buddhism does not support the idea of repentance, for it will not do any good to oneself or others. According to Buddhism wrong doing is not regarded as a "sin," for that word is foreign to the teaching of the Buddha. There is no such thing as "breaking the Buddha's law" because he was not a law-giver, an arbitrator or potentate who



punished the bad and rewarded the good deeds of beings. The doer of the deed is responsible for his own actions; he suffers or enjoys the consequences of deeds, and it is his concern either to do good or to do bad. It must also be stated that all actions, good or ill, do not necessarily mature. One's good kamma may suppress the evil kamma and vice versa.

We must also understand that the Buddhist doctrine of kamma is not fatalism, is not a philosophical doctrine to the effect that human action is not free, but necessarily determined by motives which are regarded as external forces acting upon the will, or predetermined by a God. The Buddha neither subscribed to the theory that all things are unalterably fixed, that all things happen by inevitable necessity, which is strict determinism (*niyati-vāda*) nor did he uphold the theory of complete indeterminism (*adicca-samuppanna*).

According to Buddhism there is no life after death or life before birth independent of kamma or volitional actions. Kamma is the corollary of rebirth; rebirth, on the other hand, is the corollary of kamma. Birth precedes death, and death also precedes birth, so that the pair thus accompany each other in unbroken succession.

To the scientist matter is energy in a state of stress, change without real substance. To the psychologist the "psyche" is no more a fixed entity. An individual existence is thus a succession of change, something that comes into being and passes away not remaining the same for two consecutive moments. This change of continuity, this psycho-physical process which is patent to us in this life, does not cease at death. The mind-flux continues incessantly. It is the dynamic mind-flux that is termed as kammic energy. This mighty force, this will to live, keeps life going. Thus this perpetual stream of consciousness (*viññāṇa-sota*) goes on without end so long as that myriad face thirst (*taṇhā*) in the company of ignorance (*avijjā*), the crowning corruption of all our madness, generates it.

Beings in their intense thirst for either possessions, or the satisfaction of desires, become bound to the Wheel of Existence, are twisted and torn between the spokes of agony, and securely close the door to final deliverance.

The enemy of the whole world is lust through which all evil comes to living beings. It is not only greed for and attachment to pleasure caused by the senses, wealth and property, and by the wish to defeat others and conquer countries, but also attachment to ideas, views, opinions and beliefs (*dhmma-taṇhā*) which often leads to calamity and destruction, and brings untold suffering to whole nations, in fact to the whole world. This *taṇhā*, this craving of man, is three-fold, and the mind is urged to act under the influence of these three types of *taṇhā*. Whenever craving for objects is connected with sense pleasures it is called sensuous craving (*kāma-taṇhā*). When it is associated with the belief in eternal personal existence, then it is called craving for existence, for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*). It is the desire for continuing, to exist for ever, self-preservation (*jīvitukāma*). When craving is associated with the belief in self-annihilation it is called craving for non-existence, for destruction (*vibhava-taṇhā*). The three-fold *taṇhā* or craving may be compared with that of the Freudian conception of the *eros*, *libido*, and *thanatos*.

According to Buddhism many are the defilements (*kiḷesa*) of the mind, but the root causes of all evil are: lust or craving; hatred or ill will; delusion or ignorance (*lobha*, *dosa*, *moha*). They are the motive forces by which a person acts. Actions performed through these defilements bring about repeated existence, for it is said "without abandoning lust, hate and delusion one is not free from birth."<sup>20</sup> When a person totally eradicates the trio, he or she is liberated from the shackles of *saṃsāra*, repeated existence. He is free in the full sense of the word. He no longer has any quality which will cause him to be reborn as a living being, because he has realized Nibbāna, the entire cessation of becoming (*bhava nirodha*); he has transcended common or worldly activities, and has raised himself to a state above the world while yet living in the world; his actions are issueless, are kammically ineffective; for they are not motivated by the trio, by mental defilements. He is immune to all evil, to all defilements of the heart. In him there are no motivating underlying tendencies (*anusaya*); he has given up both good and evil (*puñña pāpa pahīna*),<sup>21</sup> he is not worried by the past, the future, or even the present. He clings to nothing in the world, and so is not troubled. He is not perturbed by the vicissitudes of life. His mind is unshaken by contact



with worldly contingencies; he is sorrowless, taintless and secure (*asokaṃ, virajaṃ, khemaṃ*).<sup>22</sup> Thus Nibbāna is a "state" realizable in this very life (*diṭṭha-dhamma-nibbāna*). The thinker, the inquiring mind, will not find it difficult to understand this state which can be postulated only of the Arahāt and not of any other being either in this world or in the realm of heavenly enjoyment.

As the Buddha has so clearly pointed out: "Whatever there is of evil, connected with evil, belonging to evil, all issue from mind (literally, mind precedes them all: *mano-pubbangamā*)." "Whatever there is of good, connected with good, belonging to good, all issue from mind."<sup>23</sup>

Hence the need for man to scrutinize his own mind with a view to understanding how the human mind works, how thoughts arise and pass away. As Sigmund Freud says: "Psychological changes only come about very slowly. If they occur quickly and suddenly it is a bad sign." Knowing good thoughts as good, and evil as evil, an attempt should be made to prevent the arising of evil and unwholesome thoughts not yet arisen; to abandon the evil thoughts already arisen; to produce and develop good thoughts that have not yet arisen; and to maintain the good thoughts already arisen. This is the function of right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), a doing in the mind: to prevent, to abandon, to develop and maintain (*saṃvara, pahāna, bhāvanā anurakkhana*).<sup>24</sup> Thus in Buddhism even ethics is studied from the psychological point of view. This emphasis on right effort by the Buddha explains in unmistakable language that Buddhism is not a philosophy of pessimism, a teaching for the feeble-minded who looks at things from the most unfavourable point of view, but that it is a true warrior's religion.

Hard it is to give up what lures, and holds us in thrall, and hard it is to exorcise the evil spirits that haunt the human heart in the shape of unwholesome thoughts. These evils are the manifestation of lust, hate and delusion discussed earlier. Until one attains the very crest of purity by constant training of the mind, one cannot defeat these hosts completely. The mere abandoning of outward things, fasting and so forth, these do not tend to purify a man; these things do not make a man holy and harmless. Self-torture is one extreme which the Buddha in his

first proclamation of the Dhamma cast off as wrong, and so also did he reject sensual indulgence calling it ignoble. Avoiding these two extremes the Buddha revealed to the world the Middle Way, the Ancient Path which when fully cultivated raises man from lower to higher levels of mental life; leads him from darkness to light, from passion to dispassion; from turmoil to tranquillity, and finally to the supreme bliss of Nibbāna.

### Notes:

1. *The Foundations of Mindfulness*, trans. by Nyanasatta (Kandy:BPS), Wheel 19; see also V. F. Gunaratna, *The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and Its Application to Modern Life* (Kandy:BPS), Wheel 60.
2. Soma Thera, *The Removal of Distracting Thoughts* (Kandy:BPS), Wheel 21.
3. Dhp. v, 276.
4. A. ii, 177.
5. M. 22/1.140.
6. Vin. i, 16; M. i, 380; D. i, 110; A. iv, 186.
7. S. iii, 158.
8. S. ii, 94.
9. James Drever, *A Dictionary of Psychology*, (London: Penguin Books 1952).
10. *Dictionary of Philosophy*, Dagobert D. Runes, ed., (New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams & Co., U.S.A. 1963).
11. M. i, 266.
12. Miln. P.T.S. p.40.
13. See *Vibhāvinī Tīkā*.
14. S. ii, 104.
15. *Pali-English Dictionary*, P.T.S., under *gandhabba*.
16. D. 1/1. 21.
17. D. iii, 105; cf. Sn.v, 1055. Also "stream of becoming" (*bhava-sota*); S. iv, 291.
18. *Psychology Briefer Course*, see chapter on "The Stream of Consciousness."
19. A. iii, 415.
20. A. v, 144.
21. Dhp. v, 39.
22. Sn. v, 270.
23. A. i, 11.
24. A. ii, 15-16.



## 10

# Buddhist Meditation

### The Way to Inner Calm and Clarity

Meditation forms the very heart and core of the Buddha's teaching. As the subject is vast, this work will discuss some aspects of Buddhist meditation with special reference to Satipaṭṭhāna, "setting up or application of mindfulness."

The world today is not what it was half a century ago. Ideas of good and bad are changing fast, moral attitudes are in flux and the general outlook of people is very different.

We live in an age of rush and speed. Tension is everywhere. If you stand at the corner of a busy street and scan the faces of the people hurrying feverishly by, you will notice that most of them are restless. They carry with them an atmosphere of stress. They are mostly pictures of rush and worry. Rarely will you find a picture of calm, content and repose in any of these faces. Such is the modern world.

Today's world is characterised by inordinate haste leading to quick decisions and imprudent actions. Some shout when they could speak in normal tone, others talk excitedly at a forced pitch for long periods and finish a conversation almost exhausted. Any kind of excitement is a stress in the physiologist's sense of the word, and stress causes the speeding up of bodily processes. It is not seldom that a person driving a vehicle gets agitated on seeing the green colour of the traffic lights giving place to amber. The anxious man regards even a minor event as if it were a crisis or a threat. As a result man is worried and unhappy.

Another feature of the modern world is its noisiness. "Music hath charms," they say, but for many today, even music is not agreeable if there is no noise; the louder the noise, the greater is the

music to them. Those who live in big cities have no time to think of the noise, they are conditioned by it and accustomed to it. This noise, stress and strain have done much damage by way of ailments—heart diseases, cancer, ulcers, nervous tension and insomnia. Many of our illnesses are caused by anxiety, nervous tension, economic distress and emotional unrest—all products of modern life.

Our nervous exhaustion is increasing with the speeding up of our life. People often return home after work with their nerves on edge. As a consequence their concentration is weakened and mental and physical efficiency are lowered. Man becomes easily irritated and is quick to find fault and pick a quarrel. He becomes morbidly introspective and experiences aches and pains and suffers from hypertension and sleeplessness. These symptoms of nervous exhaustion clearly show that modern man's mind and body require rest—rest of a high quality.

Let us bear in mind that a certain aloofness, a withdrawing of the mind from the busyness of life is a requisite to mental hygiene. Whenever you get an opportunity, try to be away from the town and engage yourself in quiet contemplation, call it yoga, concentration or meditation. Learn to observe the silence. Silence does so much good to us. It is quite wrong to imagine that they alone are powerful who are noisy, garrulous and fussily busy. Silence is golden, and we must speak only if we can improve on silence. The greatest creative energy works in silence. Observing silence is important. We do that in our meditation. Hear these words of the Buddha:

“When, disciples, you have gathered together there are two things to be done: either talk about the Dhamma (the doctrine, what is righteous) or observe noble silence.”<sup>1</sup>

### **The Value of Solitude**

People are so used to noise and talk that they feel lonely and out of place if they do not speak. But if we train ourselves in the art of cultivating silence, we will learn to enjoy it.

*Go placidly amid the noise and haste and remember that there is peace in silence. We must take time off to go into retreat in search of silence. We must, now and then, break away from*



*motion to remain motionless. It is a peaceful form of existence. In lonely retreat we experience the value of silent contemplation. We make an inward journey. When we withdraw into silence, we are absolutely alone to see ourselves as we really are and then we can learn to overcome the weaknesses and limitations in ordinary experience.*

Time spent in secluded contemplation is not wasted; it goes a long way to strengthen a man's character. It is an asset to our daily work and progress if we can find the time to cut ourselves off from routine and spend a day or two in quiet contemplation. This is surely not escapism or living in idleness, but the best way to strengthen our mind. This is beneficial introspection; for it is by examining our thoughts and feeling that we can probe into the inner meaning of things and discover the powers within.

Modern man is starved for solitude. A little solitude every day, a little aloofness, a little cutting away from the "madding crowd," is very necessary to give balance to the mind which is greatly upset by the rush and speed, din and turmoil, clash and clang of modern life. It is in and through solitude that the human mind gains in strength and power.

Modern man seeks happiness outside himself instead of seeking it within. Thus he has brought the external world under his sway. Science and technology seem to promise that they can turn this world into a paradise. Today there is ceaseless work going on in all directions to improve the outer world. Scientists pursue their experiments with undiminished vigour and determination. Man's quest to unravel the hidden secrets of nature continues unabated. Modern discoveries and methods of communication have produced startling results. All these improvements, though they bring their rewards, are entirely material and external. In spite of all this, man cannot yet control his mind. Therefore, for all his scientific progress he remains discontent, anxious and tense.

People are searching for solutions to their various problems in vain because their approach, their method, is wrong. They think all problems can be solved externally. Most of the problems, however, are internal. They spring from the world within, and so the solution, too, is to be sought within.

Those interested in protecting the environment have raised their voice against air, sea and land pollution. But what of our mind pollution? Are we equally interested in protecting and cleansing our minds? As the Buddha points out: "For a long time has man's mind been defiled by greed, hatred and delusion (ignorance). Mental defilements make beings impure; mental cleansing purifies them."<sup>2</sup> The Buddhist way of life is an intense process of cleansing one's action, speech, and thought. It is self-development and self-purification resulting in self-realization. The emphasis is on practical results and not on philosophical speculation or logical abstraction. Hence the need to practise daily a little meditation, to behave like the hen on her eggs; for we have been most of the time behaving like the squirrel in the revolving cage.

Meditation is not a practice of today or yesterday. From time immemorial people have been practising meditation in diverse ways. Yogis, saints and enlightened ones of all ages have gone on the path of meditation and have attributed all their achievements to meditation. There never was, and never will be, any mental development or mental purity without meditation. Meditation was the means by which Siddhattha Gotama, the Buddha, gained supreme enlightenment.

Meditation is not only for India or for the Buddha's time, but for all mankind—for all times and climes. The boundaries of race and religion, the frontiers of time and space, are irrelevant to the practice of meditation.

All religions teach some kind of meditation or mental training for inner development. It may take the form of silent prayer, reading individually or collectively from some holy scriptures, or concentrating on some sacred object, person or idea. And it is believed that these mental exercises, at times, result in seeing visions of saints or holy men, engaging in conversation with them, or hearing voices, or some mysterious occurrences. Whether they are illusions, imaginations, hallucinations, mere projections of the subconscious mind or real phenomena, one cannot say with certainty. Mind is an invisible force capable of producing all these phenomena.

"Trance is carried so far by certain yogis and mystics that it becomes anaesthetic, and they do not feel anything."<sup>3</sup> We have seen



people in "meditation" postures who have fallen into a kind of coma and seem to be lost in thought. Others witnessing such occurrences wrongly think that this is a kind of meditation (*bhāvanā*).

Buddhist books tell us that through meditative absorption (*jhāna*), through the development of mental faculties, man is capable of gaining psychic powers. But it is very important to bear in mind that the Buddhist *jhāna* is not a state of auto-hypnosis, coma or unconsciousness. It is a state of mental purity where disturbing passions and impulses are subdued and calmed down so that the mind becomes unified and collected and enters into a state of clear consciousness and mindfulness.

It is interesting to observe that these phenomena have gained some acceptance through recent research in parapsychology. Interest in the subject of extra-sensory perception, in experimental psychology, is slowly gaining ground and the results obtained seem to be beyond ordinary comprehension. These are, however, only side-products which are of minor significance when compared with man's final deliverance, his release from bonds, from mental fetters. At times these paranormal happenings may even act as fetters and retard realization and enlightenment.

The meditation taught in Buddhism is neither for gaining union with any supreme being, nor for bringing about mystical experiences, nor for any self-hypnosis. It is for gaining tranquillity of mind (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*), for the sole purpose of attaining unshakable deliverance of the mind (*akuppā ceto vimutti*)—that supreme security from bondage attainable through the total extirpation of all mental defilements. All may not be able to reach such heights as unshakable deliverance of the mind, but failure does not matter so long as we are sincere and pure in our motives. Let us strive on, falter not. It is worth striving again and again. Some day, if not in this life, we may reach the summit that those who really strove have reached.

Even if we fail to attain full enlightenment, we will surely be rewarded in our efforts. A fast-moving society needs a little meditation to ease the stress and tension and to withstand the vicissitudes of life. Through meditation we can overcome most of our psychological

or psychosomatic problems and anxiety disorders, emotions and impulses, and gain mental calm and peace.

### **Self-Mastery and Drugs**

The Buddha says: "Though one may conquer in battle a million men, yet he indeed is the noblest victor who conquers himself."<sup>4</sup> This is nothing other than self-mastery.<sup>5</sup> It means mastering our minds, or emotions, likes and dislikes and so forth. Milton echoes the words of the Buddha when he says: "The command of one's self is the greatest empire a man can aspire unto, and consequently, to be subject to our own passions is the most grievous slavery."

Control of the mind is the key to happiness. It is the force behind all true achievement. The movements of a man void of control are purposeless. It is due to lack of control that conflicts of diverse kinds arise in our mind. And if conflicts are to be controlled, if not eliminated, we must give less rein to our longings and inclinations and endeavour to live a life self-governed and pure. Everyone is aware of the benefits of physical training. However, we are not merely bodies, we also possess a mind which needs training. Mind training or meditation is the key to self-mastery and to that contentment which brings happiness.

Of all forces the force of the mind is the most potent. It is a power by itself. To understand the real nature of life, we have to explore the innermost recesses of our mind which can only be accomplished by deep self-introspection based on purity of conduct and meditation.

From the Buddhist point of view the mind or consciousness is the core of our existence. All our psychological experiences, such as pain and pleasure, sorrow and happiness, good and evil, life and death, are not caused by any external agency. They are the result of our own thoughts and their resultant actions.

In recent times people have been busy examining and investigating psychic phenomena, the study of which seems to reveal the hidden resources of the human mind. The urge in man to seek spiritual guidance, his desire for inner development, is on the increase. This is a good sign. Western interest in Indian thought, yoga and meditation is increasing at an amazing rate. The reason is not far to seek. There is



a mounting feeling of restlessness among the people the world over. This feeling is prevalent mostly among the youth. They want a quick remedy for the turmoil of the materialistic world. They are in search of peace and tranquillity.

The problem of youth finds no solution in the dogmatic creeds of hereditary religion. The question of the inner world remains unanswered. The value placed on the material aspects of life which are taken so much for granted by modern man, seems so superficial to the searching mind. The problems of the Western world are basically psychological. Obviously material knowledge and scientific and technological know-how have not brought man the answer to world problems, to man's problems. This type of knowledge has only led to the multiplication of problems.

Young people who took to narcotic drugs in the belief that it has the answer to their mental frustration, are now turning to yogic discipline and meditation. Surely narcotic drugs cannot do for us what true meditation can do. Drugs are no substitute for true meditation in the search for a quiet mind. Drugs weaken the mind rather than strengthen it.

"The world is beset by a new plague, a disease which is incurable for most of those it touches, fatal for many, a pestilence which promises a flight into the world of dreams away from a life which is allegedly devoid of purposes and value, a disease which above all threatens the children of our technological age: narcotics. Millions of young people are already infected with this disease, thousands of them are condemned to an early death, hundreds of thousands are addicted or psychologically dependent on the soft-drugs, such as hashish, which cause brain damage, impair efficiency and lead to character disintegration ..."<sup>6</sup>

There is indisputable evidence that meditation can produce physiological changes that may, in turn, have beneficial psychological side-effects. Attempts have already been made to measure these effects. Dr. Herbert Benson, who experimented with meditation for nearly a decade, was mainly interested in finding out how factors that are psychological in nature come to exert physical effects on the heart, blood pressure and other aspects of the circulatory system and its

functions. His ideas and research are fully presented in his book, *The Relaxation Response*. Research done at Harvard University, Cambridge, U.S.A. revealed that hundreds of youths who took LSD and smoked marijuana abstained from using them after several months of meditation.<sup>7</sup>

### **Meditation Cures Pressure**

Meditation is not a voluntary exile from life or something practised for the hereafter. Meditation should be applied to the daily affairs of life, and its results obtained here and now. It is not separated from the work-a-day life. It is part and parcel of our life. This fact becomes clear when we study the four-fold setting up, or application of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). When free from the rush of city life, from nagging preoccupation with the world, we are not so liable to lose control. It is only in society that it takes some effort to check such lapses. Any meditation we do is of immense help in enabling us to face all this with calm. If we ignore meditation, life lacks meaning, purpose and inspiration.

There was a time when many thought that meditation is only for the recluses, yogis and forest dwellers. Things, however, have changed, and now there is a growing interest in meditation. If by meditation is meant mental discipline or mind culture, it goes without saying that all should cultivate meditation irrespective of sex, colour, creed or any other division. Modern society is in danger of being swamped by distractions and temptations which can only be controlled if we undertake the difficult task of steadily training our minds.

It is very difficult, indeed, for people to turn away from accustomed modes of thought and conduct, but meditation can help to ease the burden of chaotic cares in life. The ultimate aim of Buddhist meditation is to gain full enlightenment, self-mastery and complete mental health or Nibbāna through the conquest of mental defilements. But apart from this ultimate aim there are other advantages and benefits that can be derived through meditation. It can inspire us to discover our own intelligence, richness and natural dignity. Meditation can also stimulate the latent powers of the mind, aid clear thinking, deep understanding, mental balance and tranquillity. It is a creative process



which aims at converting the chaotic feelings and unwholesome thoughts into mental harmony and purity. It is the most meaningful therapy for the problems of modern life. When the mind is trained through meditation, it can perceive things that are beyond the range of normal senses. All these benefits can be obtained through meditation, not all at once, but gradually, through systematic training and practice.

In addition, meditation has physical ramifications. Meditation can relax the nerves, control or reduce the blood pressure, make us zestful by stemming the dissipation of energy through tensions, improve our health and keep us fit. The medical profession has taken cognizance of the use of meditation as is shown by this article:

“It has now been proved that high blood pressure and other diseases connected with the heart could easily be cured by Buddhist meditation. Dr. Buddhadasa Bodhinayake, Consultant Psychiatrist, Harley Hospital Essex, UK, and Postgraduate Tutor of the British Medical Federation in charge of doctors’ appointments in East London, said that the British Cardiac Society had recently accepted the curative effects of Buddhist meditation. Dr. Bodhinayake stated that over 68,000 British patients were now practising *Ānāpānasati* meditation. They had found that this meditation treatment did more for them than drugs. He said that all religions had meditation practices, but the *Ānāpānasati* (breathing meditation) was exclusive to Buddhism. Unlike other meditation practices, this had an effect on both sides of the brain. Thus it was capable of bringing the marvellous results on patients. He said that 30 minutes of meditation—15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes in the evening gave the patients the body relaxation equal to 6 to 7 hours of sleep.

“It had been scientifically proved through electro-encephalograph (EEG) readings that the *Ānāpānasati* meditation was capable of synchronising the working of the two sides of the brain. This reduced the patient’s oxygen needs, reduced the heartbeat, blood pressure, and the breathing rate. Fifteen minutes of *Ānāpānasati* meditation had the effect of three Aldomat tablets (250 mg) on a high blood pressure patient. Dr. Bodhinayake said that it had also been proved that this meditation could be used to get people out of drug addiction. It also greatly helped brain development, thinking capacity and retentive power.

"A large number of students of Harvard University in the USA were now practising *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā* to get through their exams."<sup>8</sup>

## **Buddhism and Mysticism**

Even some psychosomatic ailments can be cured by meditation. We can use meditation in treating emotional and stress disease as well as to break the vicious addiction to drugs. Meditation, relaxation, and other types of mental therapy can be used with advantage in chronic illnesses.

Meditation is a way of living, a total way of living and not a partial activity. It aims at developing man as a whole. Let us strive for perfection here and now, not in some golden age yet to come. It may not be impossible to get what we really want in life by unlocking the psychic powers within us, the wonderful power of our mind.

Meditation is a distinctively human phenomenon, and therefore, should be dealt with from a human point of view, with human feelings and human understanding. Human problems and their solutions are basically psychological in nature. True meditation and mysticism do not co-exist. They are two different things. While mysticism takes us away from reality, meditation brings us to reality; for through real meditation we can see our own illusions and hallucinations face to face without pretence. This brings about a total transformation in our personality. It is more of an unlearning than a learning. We have to give up many things that we have learnt and hugged in great glee once we realize that they are hindrances and obsessions.

All of our psychological problems are rooted in ignorance, in delusion. Ignorance is the crowning corruption (*avijjā paramam malam*).<sup>9</sup> Our greeds, hates, conceits and a host of other defilements go hand in hand with our ignorance. The solutions are to be found in the problems themselves and hence we should not run away from them. Analyse and scrutinize the problems, and you will see that they are all human problems, so do not attribute them to non-humans. Our real problems can be solved only by giving up illusions and false concepts and bringing our lives into harmony with reality. This can be done only through meditation.



## The Eightfold Path

Refraining from intoxicants and becoming heedful, establishing themselves in patience and purity, the wise train their minds. It is not too hard a task for a man to be calm when everything around him is favourable, but to be composed in mind in the midst of unfavourable circumstances is hard indeed. It is just this difficult thing that is well worth accomplishing, for thereby one builds up one's strength of character.

It is through training in quiet contemplation that a quiet mind is achieved. Can we also achieve it? Lord Horder answers the question thus: "Yes. But how? Well, not by doing some great thing. 'Why were the saints saints?' someone asked. And the answer came: 'Because they were cheerful when it was difficult to be cheerful and patient when it was difficult to be patient. They pushed on when they wanted to stand still, and kept silent when they wanted to talk.' That was all. So simple, but so difficult. A matter of mental hygiene ..." Strive again and again without giving up the struggle. No one reaches the summit of a hill at once. Like the skilful smith who removes the dross in silver bit by bit, man must try to purge himself of his impurities.<sup>10</sup>

The path pointed out by the Buddhas or Enlightened Ones of all ages for inner growth and development is that of meditation, and this is the Noble Eightfold Path. Its eight factors are in three groups: virtue, concentration and wisdom or insight (*sīla*, *saṃādhi* and *paññā*). This is the only path; there are no short cuts to enlightenment and deliverance of the mind. All the practical guidance and instructions given by the Buddha to remove mental conflicts due to the unsatisfactoriness of life are to be found in the Noble Eightfold Path: right understanding, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

## Twofold Meditation

The exposition of meditation as it is handed down in the early Buddhist writings is based on the methods used by the Buddha for his own attainment of enlightenment and Nibbāna, and on his personal experience of mental development.

The word "meditation" really is no equivalent for the Buddhist term "*bhāvanā*" which literally means "development" or "culture," that is development of the mind, culture of the mind, or "making-the-mind-become." It is the effort to build up a calm, concentrated mind that sees clearly the true nature of all phenomenal things and realizes Nibbāna, the ideal state of mental health.

Meditation as taught by the Buddha is twofold: concentration (*samatha* or *samādhi*), that is, one-pointedness or unification of the mind (*cittakaggatā*), and insight (*vipassanā*). *Samādhi* or concentration has the function of calming the mind, and for this reason the word *samatha* or *samādhi*, in some contexts, is rendered as calmness, tranquillity or quiescence. Calming the mind implies unification or "one-pointedness" of the mind. Unification is brought about by focusing the mind on one salutary object to the exclusion of all others.

Meditation (*bhāvanā*) begins with concentration (*samādhi*). Concentration is a state of undistractedness. What is concentration? What are its marks, requisites and development?

"Whatever is unification of mind, this is concentration; the four settings up of mindfulness are the marks of concentration; the four right efforts<sup>11</sup> are the requisites for concentration; whatever is the exercise, the development, the increase of these very things, this is herein the development of concentration."<sup>12</sup> This statement clearly indicates that the three factors of the *samādhi* group, namely, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration, function together in support of each other. They comprise real concentration.

It must be mentioned that the development of concentration or calm as taught in Buddhism is not exclusively Buddhist. Yogis before the advent of the Buddha practised different systems of meditation as they do now. India has always been a land of mysticism, but the yoga then prevalent in India never went beyond a certain point.

*Samādhi* taught in Buddhism culminates in *jhāna*.<sup>13</sup> But the Buddha was not satisfied with mere *jhāna* and mystical experiences; his one and only aim was to attain full enlightenment— Nibbāna. Having gained perfect concentrative calm through *samatha* meditation, he was able to develop *vipassanā* (insight) meditation. The word "*vipassanā*" (*vi*+ *passanā*) means seeing in an extraordinary way—



from the word "*passanā*" to see and the prefix "*vi*" denoting special, particular. *Vipassanā* therefore means seeing beyond what is ordinary, clear vision. It is not surface seeing or skimming, not seeing mere appearances, but seeing things as they really are. This means seeing everything in terms of the three characteristics, the signs of all phenomenal existence: impermanence, suffering and egolessness (*anicca, dukkha* and *anattā*). It is this insight meditation, with calm concentration of mind as its basis, that enables the meditator to purge his mind of all defilements, to remove ego-illusion, to see reality, and to experience Nibbāna.

*Vipassanā* or insight meditation, therefore, is an essential, a typical doctrine of the Buddha himself, not heard by before him, a unique experience of the Master, exclusively Buddhist, which was not in existence prior to the Buddha.

It must be stressed that both tranquillity and insight (*samādhi* and *vipassanā*) are essential for the realization of the Dhamma, for enlightenment and Nibbāna. The Buddha points out: "When tranquillity is developed, the mind is developed and lust is abandoned; when insight is developed, right understanding is developed and ignorance is abandoned. The mind defiled with lust is not liberated; when there is defilement through ignorance, right understanding is not developed ..." <sup>14</sup>

*Samādhi* (*samatha*) being one of the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, under no circumstances can it be dispensed with. *Samādhi* is *cittavisuddhi*, purity of mind which comes into being through the elimination of hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*).

Now it is clear that according to the teaching of the Buddha, *samādhi* cannot be bypassed on the journey to enlightenment and Nibbāna.

### Types of Temperament

Mind is such a subtle and intricate phenomenon that it is not possible to find two men of the same mind. Man's thoughts are translated into speech and action. Repetition of such speech and action gives rise to habits and finally, habits form character. Character

is the result of man's mind-directed activities and so the characters of human beings vary.

*The Path of Purification*, the *Visuddhimagga*, mentions six main types of character or temperament (*carita*) which include many lesser ones. They are those disposed to *lust*, *hatred*, *infatuation*, *faith*, *intellectuality* and *discursiveness*. As temperaments differ, so do the subjects of meditation (*kammaṭṭhānas*). One comes across these *kammaṭṭhānas* enumerated in the Pali texts, especially in the discourses of the Buddha. *The Path of Purification* describes forty of them. They are really like prescriptions for various mental disorders that human beings are heir to.

In the Majjhima Nikāya, one of the five original collections in Pali containing the discourses of the Buddha, there are two discourses (Nos. 61 and 62) that are devoted wholly to instructions on meditation. In Discourse No. 62 the Buddha gives seven types of meditation to young Rāhula, the novice, who, according to the commentary, was only eighteen years of age when he received them. Here is an extract from the discourse:

“Develop the meditation on lovingkindness (*mettā*), Rāhula; for by this, ill will (*vyāpāda*) is banished.

Develop the meditation on compassion (*karuṇā*), Rāhula; for by this, cruelty (*viheṣā*) is banished.

Develop the meditation on sympathetic joy (*muditā*), Rāhula; for by this, aversion (to meditation) (*arati*) is banished.

Develop the meditation on equanimity (*upekkhā*), Rāhula; for by this, hatred (*paṭigha*) is banished.

Develop the meditation on repulsiveness (*asubha*), Rāhula; for by this, lust (*rāga*) is banished.

Develop the meditation on the perception of impermanence (*anicca saññā*), Rāhula; for by this, pride of self, or ‘I’, (*asmimāna*) is banished.

Develop the concentration of mindfulness on in-and-out-breathing (*ānāpānasati*), Rāhula; in-and-out-breathing with mindfulness,



developed and frequently practised bears much fruit, is of great advantage.”<sup>15</sup>

The Buddha not only instructed and encouraged others to practise meditation, but also used to practise it as a way of peaceful-abiding here and now (*diṭṭhadhamma sukhavihāri*). Once the Blessed One said: “Monks, I wish to live in solitude for three months. Let my only visitor be the one who brings me food.” “Very well, venerable sir,” replied the monks. At the end of the three months the Blessed One addressed the monks thus:

“Monks, if others (those belonging to other faiths) were to ask you: ‘What meditation did Samana Gotama frequently practise during the Rains?’ you should say: ‘The Blessed One spent the Rains frequently practising the meditation of mindfulness on in-and-out-breathing.’ Herein, monks, I breathe in, mindful I breathe out ... Monks, one who speaks rightly should say: mindfulness on in-and-out-breathing is the *ariya* (noble) way of life, the *brahma* (sublime) way of life, the Tathāgata’s (an epithet for the Buddha) way of life.”<sup>16</sup>

One should not try to practise all the forty subjects of meditation. What is important is to select the one that suits one best. It helps to seek the guidance of a person who is experienced in meditation. Books written on meditation could also be useful. It is, however, important to recognize honestly what our temperament or character is; for until we have done so, we cannot select the subject suitable of meditation. Once we have chosen it, we should work at it with confidence. *Meditation is a “do it yourself practice.”*

If we are engrossed in worldly affairs, in routine work, it may not be easy for us to cut ourselves off and sit down in a quiet place for a definite period each day for various meditations. But it can be done, if we have the will. Surely we can devote a short period every day to meditation, whether it be at dawn or just before retiring to bed or whenever the mind is ready—some short period of time, however brief, in which to collect our thoughts and concentrate.

If we thus try to cultivate a quiet contemplation day by day, we will be able to perform our duties better and in a more efficient way; we will have the courage to face worries and tribulations with a brave

heart and will find contentment more easily. It is worth trying, only we must have the patience, the firm determination and the urge to make the effort, and if we are sincere we may well succeed. The meditation should be done, if possible, regularly at fixed times, for a considerable period, and we must not expect quick results. Psychological changes come slowly.

### **The Threefold Training**

It is essential for us to discipline ourselves in speech and action before we undertake the arduous task of training our mind through meditation. The aim of Buddhist morality (*sīla*) is the control of our verbal and physical action, in other words, purity of speech and action. This is called training in virtue (*sīla-sikkhā*). Three factors of the Noble Eightfold Path form the Buddhist code of conduct (*sīla*). They are right speech, right action and right livelihood. The strict meditator observes at least the five basic precepts of morality known as *pañca-sīla*—abstinence from killing, stealing, illicit sexual indulgence, speaking falsehood and from taking liquor, including narcotic drugs that cause intoxication and heedlessness. In a meditation course the participants are expected to abstain from all sexual relations, and observe chastity.

This code of conduct (*sīla*) is the stepping-stone to the Buddhist way of life. It is the basis for mental development. One who is intent on meditation or concentration of mind should develop a love of virtue that nourishes mental life and makes it steady and calm. This searcher of the highest purity of the mind practises the burning out of the passions. He thinks: "Others may harm, but I will become harmless; others may slay living beings, but I will become a non-slayer; others may wrongly take things, but I will not; others may live unchaste, but I will live pure; others may slander, talk harshly, indulge in gossip, but I will talk only words that promote concord, harmless words, agreeable to the ear, full of love, heart pleasing, courteous, worthy of being borne in mind, timely, fit and to the point; others may be covetous, I will not covet; others may mentally lay hold of things awry, but I will lay mental hold of things fully aright. Energetic, steeped in lowliness of heart, unswerving as regards truth and rectitude, peaceful, honest, contented, generous and truthful in all things will I be. I will cherish



mindfulness and wise penetration that is fully aware of the truth at all times, and will not be moved by the evanescent or grasp at it."<sup>17</sup> Thus, he never acts slavishly like the unthinking herd.

*Sīla* or the code of conduct set forth by the Buddha, therefore, is not a set of mere negative prohibitions but an affirmation of doing good—a career paved with good intentions for the welfare and happiness of mankind. These moral principles aim at making society secure by promoting unity, harmony and mutual understanding among people.

Virtue aids the cultivation of concentration (*samādhi*). The last three factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, namely: right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration, form the concentration group. This is called training in concentration (*samādhi-sikkhā*). Progressing in virtue the meditator practises mental culture. Seated in cloister cell, or at the foot of a tree, or under the open sky, or in some other suitable place, he fixes his mind on a subject of meditation and by unceasing effort washes out the impurities of his mind and gradually gains mental absorption by abandoning the hindrances.

High concentration is the means to the acquisition of wisdom or insight. Wisdom consists of right understanding and right thought, the first two factors of the path. This is called training in wisdom (*paññā-sikkhā*). Thus the path is virtue, concentration and wisdom which are referred to in the discourses of the Buddha as the threefold training (*tividhā-sikkhā*). None of them, however, is an end in itself; each is a means to an end. One cannot function independently of the others. As in the case of a tripod, which falls to the ground if even a single leg gives way, so here, one cannot function without the support of the others. These three go together supporting each other. Virtue strengthens concentration. Concentration in its turn promotes wisdom, and wisdom helps us to get rid of the clouded view of things—to see life as it really is, that is to see life and all things pertaining to life as arising and passing (*udaya-vaya*). By a gradual process, a gradual training and gradual practice,<sup>18</sup> the disciple rids himself of all defilements, eradicates them and attains deliverance, which means the living experience of the cessation of the three root causes of all evil: greed, hatred and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*). These three root causes are thus eliminated through training in virtue, concentration and wisdom.

With that final cleaning up he reaches the state where dawns for him the light of Nibbāna, the calm beyond words, the unshakability beyond all thought, the freedom that is beyond all deeds, the sure and secure ground, the splendour that is imperishable, the happiness of stillness, of relief and perfect peace, immeasurably deep and pure, which can be overturned by nothing and by none, the highest truth. That is the very crown of the meditative life; it is its greatest fruit. With the attainment of that fruit all birth, old age and death are brought to an end, the pure life of holiness is lived out, all that must be done, is done, and the world holds nothing more for him. This, in short, is the way by which the meditator by gradual training attains his goal.

Thus we see that virtue, concentration and wisdom are not isolated qualities but integral parts of the Noble Eightfold Path which is also the path of meditation already outlined.

### Application of Mindfulness

Now let us proceed to the special procedure attached to the practice of meditation, to discuss one very important aspect of Buddhist meditation, namely, *satipaṭṭhāna*, the "setting up, the application of, mindfulness." The word "*paṭṭhāna*," the shortened form of "*upaṭṭhāna*," means literally "placing near (one's mind)," that is, remaining aware, setting up, establishing, applying or arousing. To raise up the person to a keen sense of awareness in regard to an object, and to bring into play, call forth, and stir up the controlling faculty, the power, the enlightenment factor, and the way factor of mindfulness—this is the setting up of mindfulness.

The Discourse on the Setting up of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), is one of the most important discourses delivered by the Buddha. It occurs twice in the Buddhist Canon.<sup>19</sup> The opening lines of the discourse clearly state: *Satipaṭṭhāna is the one and only way (ekāyano maggo) for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the abandoning of pain and grief, for reaching the right path and realising Nibbāna.*

The setting up of mindfulness is fourfold: Application of mindfulness in regard to: 1. the body (*kāyānu-passanā*); 2. feeling or sensations (*vedanānupassanā*); 3. activities of the mind (*cittānupassanā*);



and 4. mental objects or mental contents (*dhammānupassanā*). The essential thing here is mindfulness (*sati*), attention or observation (*anupassana*).

As mentioned above, concentrative calm is fulfilled by the conjunction of the last three factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, namely: right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. These form the three strands of the rope; they are intertwined and interrelated. Mindfulness, however, is considered as the strongest strand for it plays an important role in the acquisition of both calm and insight. Mindfulness is a certain function of the mind, and therefore, a mental factor. Without this all-important factor of mindfulness one cannot recognize sense objects, one cannot be fully aware of one's behaviour. It is called right mindfulness because it avoids misdirected attention and prevents the mind from paying attention to things unwholesome, and guides its possessor on the right path to purity and freedom.

Right mindfulness sharpens the power of observation and assists right thinking and right understanding. Orderly thinking and reflection is conditioned by man's right mindfulness. The discourse states clearly how a meditator becomes aware of his thoughts, mindfully watching each and every one of them, be they good or evil, salutary or otherwise. The earnest student will note that even reading the discourse makes him watchful, earnest and serious-minded. Right mindfulness is a quality that no sensible man would treat with contempt. Truly it is essential to cultivate mindfulness in this confused age when so many people suffer from mental imbalance.

Right mindfulness is instrumental not only in bringing concentrative calm, but in promoting right understanding and right living. It is an essential factor in all our actions, both worldly and spiritual. Now we see that meditation is not escapism, running away from life and society, not a voluntary exile from life, but the ideal form of life itself.

### Meditation in Practice

It is only when we sit down for meditation that we can analyse ourselves seriously without pretence. Then the concept of a self or ego disappears. We see only a conflux of mind and body void of any permanent entity, any core or an indestructible ego. Looked at from

this point of view, we are neither oriental nor occidental, neither man nor woman. Life is just a process that goes beyond the boundaries of caste, colour, creed, race and space.

So try to be straight, transparently straight with yourself, your feelings and thoughts. Try to see yourself as you really are and not as you appear to be. This cannot be done unless you are sincere and have confidence in yourself. Open-mindedness or free inquiry is a necessity in the Buddhist system of meditation. Without it the beginner cannot lay the foundation on which the superstructure has to be built. And as truth is a personal and individual concern, neither information nor instruction can inspire a meditator unless he is trained in the methods of self-inquiry. Meditation, therefore, is vital because it is through meditation that the secrets of the mind can be unlocked.

The discourse on mindfulness prescribes the technique for mental culture. It shows us how to get beyond the intellect to the actual experience of life itself, to discover the deeper universal maladies of the human mind and to work for its deliverance—supreme security from bondage.

Now let us proceed with the discussion of the contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), especially the method known as *ānāpānasati* or mindfulness of in-breathing and out-breathing. This is a well-known meditation liked and practised by many the world over, a universally applicable method for concentrating and calming the mind. It was used by the Bodhisatta, Siddhattha Gotama, when striving for enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, and the Buddha himself was emphatic on the importance of practising it. This meditation is described as peaceful, sublime, unadulterated, happy living (*santo ceva paṇīto ca asecanako ca sukho ca vihāro*).<sup>20</sup> It must, however, be noted that *ānāpānasati* is not a “breathing exercise” for physical vigour and is not similar to *prāṇayāma* taught in Hindu yoga systems.

The type of place recommended for this meditation is a forest, the foot of a tree, or a lonely place either under the open sky or in some other suitable place. Find a quiet place, if possible away from the din and bustle, clash and clang of busy life. Your own bedroom or your “shrine room,” if you are fortunate to have one, may be a more private place for you.



For this meditation one needs the sitting posture. Sit erect with legs crossed, but not stiff and rigid; be mindful and alert. You may sometimes feel uncomfortable if the legs are interlocked, or if sitting on the hard floor interferes with your concentration. Then you can adopt a posture that does not bring discomfort. You may sit on a chair with a straight back, but for this particular meditation, unlike the others, the body (spinal column) and head should be erect, balanced and upright. You should sit comfortably but without leaning or lying back, otherwise you may become sleepy. Hands may be relaxed on the lap, or the right palm may be placed on the left, palm facing up. Eyes may be half-closed, or shut, without strain, lips should be closed, the tongue touching the upper palate. All these indicate that a person bent on this meditation should also have his body collected, which is an asset to his mental concentration and mindfulness.

Keep the body as motionless as possible, the mind alert and keenly observant. Body and mind alike must be as well strung as a bow, and as well-tuned as a lyre. Meditation is really a practical occupation. Just as the tortoise shelters its limbs under its shell, so should the meditator guard his five sense organs and overcome the sex impulse with mindfulness. He should preserve all his energy to gain mental development. Try to do your meditation regularly. If possible, at the same time, every day; for these psychological factors make for the success of the meditation.

The in-breathing and out-breathing, we know, is automatic. Normally no one tries to breathe consciously, or mindfully but when practising breathing meditation it is essential to breathe mindfully and to be aware of the breath. The normal flow of breath should be noticed, observed. Breathing calms down the body and prepares it for deep meditation. What is aimed at is the power of concentration. Psychologists have recognized the value and importance of mindful breathing as tending to ease the tension of body and mind. This meditation is, therefore, a really practical occupation, therapeutic in the best sense of the word. It is not for mere intellectual understanding but to liberate oneself from mental defilements and to attain purity and peace of mind.

In this breathing meditation, the most important thing is to be mindful of the breathing. It is essential to be mindful, to be aware

(*sati*), and attentive and observant (*anupassanā*) in all the four types of meditation on mindfulness. Relax utterly, leave the world of stress when you sit down for meditation. When you do the first three in-breathings, imagine that you are taking in all that is good and pure in the environment, in the cosmos. When you do the first three out-breathings imagine that you are putting out all the "toxic" thoughts in you, all that is bad and ugly. That is how you should get into the meditative frame of mind.

### Actors on a Stage

Now start your meditation on mindfulness of in and-out-breathing (*ānāpānasati*). Your breathing should be very natural and effortless. Breathe calmly. There should not be any effort to control the breath. Merely allow the breath to ebb and flow freely in its own natural rhythm under the light of full awareness.

The meditator breathes in and breathes out mindfully with full awareness. He is mindful of the breath and not of himself. His one and only aim is to focus the mind on the breath to the exclusion of all other thoughts and to fix the mind there; for if what is in the marginal zone breaks in upon the focal zone, he will find it difficult to concentrate, he becomes discursive. It may be helpful for a beginner to make note of "in" and "out," when doing the breathing meditation. If you experience difficulty in keeping your attention on the breath, count "one" for inspiration, "two" for expiration; register "one" at the end of one inspiration, "two" at the end of an expiration and so forth. Do not count to less than five or more than ten since your attention might divert from breaths to counts. Give up counting when concentration can be focused on breath alone.

When you practise mindfulness on in-breathing and out-breathing, fix your attention at the point where the moving air strokes the nostrils or the upper lip. *Note your breath as it goes in and out, but do not follow the breath into your lungs or out into the air. There should not be any holding or stopping of your breath.* It should be quite natural without any effort or force on your part. Keep your focus at the nose breath. At times the breath may become so fine that you can hardly catch it. You may no longer notice the breath, but that must not be taken to mean that your mind is blank. This is just impossible; for



you cannot think of a mind void of thoughts. When you cannot notice the breath you are aware of this, and that certainly is not a blank mind. You will become aware of the breath again.

Whenever your mind wanders to other thoughts, be aware of them, but do not get involved in them emotionally or intellectually; do not comment, condemn, evaluate or appraise them, but bring your attention back to the natural rhythm of your breathing. Your mind may be overwhelmed by evil and unwholesome thoughts. This is to be expected. It is in meditation that you understand how your mind works. Become aware of both the good and evil, the ugly and beautiful, the wholesome and unwholesome thoughts. Do not become elated with your good thoughts and depressed with the bad. These thoughts come, and they go like actors on a stage. When you hear sounds, become aware of them and bring your attention back to your breath. The same with regard to smell, taste (which you may get mentally), touch, pain, pleasure and so forth. Observe the thoughts in a calm detached way. Mindfulness means observing whatever happens inside oneself, whatever one does, not judging it as good or bad, but just watching with naked awareness. It is really using full concentration on whatever one is doing or experiencing.

You may also get mental images produced by memory or imagination, such as light, colour, figures, etc. Do not be deceived by them thinking that this is a mental development. Far from it, they are hindrances that retard progress. Become aware of these images without getting mentally involved in them; bring your attention to your breath. One needs much patience and effort to get away from these by-products and to get busy with the real task of practising concentration. *How strong and stupendous should the mental effort and patience be to bring about mental purity and perfection through calm and insight (samatha-vipassanā)? Only a genuine meditator knows this.*

It is natural for the worldling to entertain evil and wrong thoughts. "Lust penetrates an undeveloped mind, as rain an ill-thatched house."<sup>21</sup> Man's passions are disturbing. This lust, when obstructed by some cause, is transformed into anger. One, therefore, should try to develop and unfold good and wholesome thoughts, the infinite possibilities that are latent in human nature. To do this, one

needs training in calmness (*samādhi-sikkhā*). It is through gradual training that one can check the mind and rule it (*cittam vasam vattati*), and not become a slave to mind (*cittassa vasena vattati*).<sup>22</sup> With such training in mind-culture, one can free oneself from the influence of sense-objects.

Since worldly progress, gain and profit, depend largely on your own efforts, surely you should strive even harder to train your mind and so develop the best that is in you. As mental training requires great effort and personal integrity, strive on now. *"Do not let your days pass away like the shadow of a cloud which leaves behind it no trace for remembrance."*

### Advice to a Meditator

The Buddhist Canon is full of reference to this meditation on in-and-out-breathing (*ānāpānasati*) and it is no wonder that the Buddha, when exhorting the novice Rāhula, gave detailed instruction on its practice. Let us turn again to Discourse 62 of the Majjhima Nikāya, Mahā Rāhulovāda Sutta:

"A disciple, Rāhula, having gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to a lonely quiet place, sits down, cross-legged, keeping the body erect and mindfulness alert. Mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out; when breathing in a long breath, he knows 'I breathe in a long breath'; when breathing out a long breath, he knows 'I breathe out a long breath'; when breathing in a short breath, he knows 'I breathe in a short breath'; when breathing out a short breath; he knows 'I breathe out a short breath'; 'mindful of the entire process,<sup>23</sup> I shall breathe in,' thus he trains himself. 'Mindful of the entire process, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself.'

"Calming the entire process, I shall breathe in,' thus he trains himself; 'calming the entire process I shall breathe out,' thus he trains himself.

"Experiencing rapture, I shall breathe in,' thus he trains himself; 'experiencing rapture, I shall breathe out,' thus he trains himself.

"Experiencing bliss, I shall breathe in,' thus he trains himself; 'experiencing bliss I shall breathe out,' thus he trains himself.



“‘Experiencing the mental activity (feeling and perception), I shall breathe in,’ thus he trains himself; ‘experiencing the mental formations, I shall breathe out,’ thus he trains himself.

“‘Calming the mental activity, I shall breathe in,’ thus he trains himself; ‘calming the mental formations, I shall breathe out,’ thus he trains himself.

“‘Experiencing the highly concentrated (*jhānic*) mind I shall breathe in,’ thus he trains himself; ‘experiencing the highly concentrated (*jhānic*) mind, I shall breathe out,’ thus he trains himself.

“‘Exceedingly gladdening the mind (by *samatha*, calming, as well as by *vipassanā*, insight), I shall breathe in,’ thus he trains himself; ‘exceedingly gladdening the mind, I shall breathe out,’ thus he trains himself.

“‘Thoroughly establishing the mind (on the breath), I shall breathe in,’ thus he trains himself; ‘thoroughly establishing the mind I shall breathe out,’ thus he trains himself.

“‘Liberating the mind (from the *nivāraṇas*, or hindrances), I shall breathe in,’ thus he trains himself; ‘liberating the mind I shall breathe out,’ thus he trains himself.

“‘Contemplating impermanence (in body, feeling, perception, volitional formations, consciousness), I shall breathe in,’ thus he trains himself; ‘contemplating impermanence I shall breathe out,’ thus he trains himself.

“‘Contemplating detachment, I shall breathe in,’ thus he trains himself; ‘contemplating detachment I shall breathe out,’ thus he trains himself.

“‘Contemplating cessation I shall breathe in,’ thus he trains himself; ‘contemplating cessation I shall breathe out,’ thus he trains himself.

“‘Contemplating abandonment, I shall breathe in,’ thus he trains himself; ‘contemplating abandonment, I shall breathe out,’ thus he trains himself.

"Mindfulness on in-and-out-breathing, Rāhula, thus developed and frequently practised is productive of much fruit, of much advantage. When, Rāhula, in-and-out-breathing with mindfulness is thus developed and frequently practised, even the last in-breaths and the out-breaths are known (clear) as they cease, not unknown."<sup>24</sup>

There are those who say that this type of meditation is purposeless and stupid. Well let them say what they will. Let philosophers philosophise, orators go on with their oratory; you go your way practising mindfulness. Even the Buddha was attacked by his contemporaries for leading the life "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife." Thus in *Dīgha Nikāya*, we find these aspersions cast at the Buddha by the wanderer Nigrodha: "The Samana Gotama's insight is ruined by his habit of seclusion. He is not at home in conducting an assembly. He is not ready in conversation. He is occupied only with the fringes of things. Even as a one-eyed cow that avoids contact and follows only the outskirts, so is the Samana Gotama."<sup>25</sup>

The Buddha really did not spend all his time in solitude. He walked the highways and by-ways of India enfolding all within the aura of his love and compassion. They listened to the Buddha, took refuge in him, and followed him who showed the path to peace and enlightenment; the path is open to all. Occasionally he went into long solitude.

### **The Five Hindrances**

As you proceed developing this mindfulness by degrees, your mind will get fully concentrated on the breath. You will notice that there is only a breath and the mind noticing it and nothing behind it—no self or any permanent ego entity or anything of that nature. The breath and you are not two things, only a process, a mere rise and fall of the breath like the waves of the sea. In the highest sense there is a meditation, but no meditator. If you can come to that level of understanding, then your concentration is very high and with this comes rapturous joy, calm and peace of mind, and this will be a tremendous experience for you, a kind of experience you have never had before.



This may be only for a short while, and your mind may again become discursive. It may wander and you may find it difficult to concentrate. You may feel lazy or sleepy, bored or restless, and get fed up with your meditation. It does not matter, that is how the human mind works. Now you know the behaviour of your mind through self-experience and not through books or hearsay. You should whip up enthusiasm, marshal energy and onward ever bravely press forgetting yourself. One day, you may even attain *jhānic* experience or meditative absorption by casting out the hindrances. This concentration, this calming meditation (*samatha-bhāvanā*) is essential for right understanding, penetration and insight (*vipassanā*), to the attainment of complete mental health—*Nibbāna*.

There are many obstacles that confront a meditator, but there are five hindrances in particular that obstruct concentration and the path to deliverance. They are called hindrances (*nīvaraṇāni*)<sup>26</sup> because they completely close in, cut off and obstruct. They close the door to deliverance. What are the five? Sense desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, sceptical doubt.

A mind that is obsessed by such detrimental forces cannot concentrate successfully on any object of wholesome nature. Without right effort the five hindrances to mental progress cannot be overcome. The function of right effort is fourfold: to prevent, abandon, develop, and maintain. Right effort is the persevering endeavour (a) to prevent the arising of evil unwholesome thoughts that have not yet arisen in the mind; (b) to discard such evil thoughts already arisen; (c) to produce wholesome thoughts not yet arisen; and (d) to promote and maintain the good thoughts already present.<sup>27</sup>

The unwholesome thoughts referred to here are the three root causes of all evil, namely: thoughts of greed (lust), hatred, and delusion (ignorance). All other defilements rally round these root causes, while wholesome thoughts are their opposites.

The four right efforts are the requisites for concentration. Right effort functions together and simultaneously with the other two factors of the group, namely: right mindfulness and right concentration. Right effort removes the evil and unhealthy thoughts that act as a barrier to the calm of absorption and promotes and maintains the

healthy mental factors that aid the development of concentration. When the meditator's mind slackens, it is time for him to summon courage, whip up effort and overcome indolence. Obduracy of mind and of mental factors is a dangerous enemy to meditation, for when a man's mind is inert, slackness arises. This leads to greater slackness which produces sullen indifference.

### **Avoid Extremes**

Mind culture through such great efforts is not something that can be gained overnight. It needs time and regular practice of mental exercises. An athlete or body-builder does not stop training after a day or two, but goes on with his program. Regular exercises, without unnecessary strain, are the key to physical fitness. If he practises only by fits and starts, he will never be a good athlete. When training the mind, the same golden rule has to be applied—regular work and perseverance.

One need not struggle with evil thoughts when doing mental exercises. It should all be natural. If we try to fight with thoughts we shall not succeed. Instead we should note and watch our thoughts as they rise, and try to ease the tension. The technique is like that of swimming. If you do not move your limbs, you will sink; if you whirl about, you will also sink. Again, it is like trying to fall asleep—if you struggle with the thought of sleep, you will never fall off; it will only be a mental torment to you. You must not make any effort to sleep. It must come naturally, and you should only relax the tense muscles. So this is, shall we say, an effortless effort to stay vigilant and be aware in the present.

Again self-torment is one of the two extremes (the other is self-indulgence) that the Buddha wants the meditator to avoid as profitless, and not leading to calm and enlightenment.<sup>28</sup> It is useless to torture the body (as is still done by Indian ascetics) in order to stop the arising of evil thoughts; for such torments often end in aversion and frustration. When the mind is frustrated, callous indifference to meditation follows. All our mental exercises should be natural and performed with awareness. "Zeal without prudence is like running in the night."



As the Buddha points out, extremes should be avoided everywhere by those who wish to gain deliverance of mind through enlightenment. They should keep to the Middle Path. In the practice of right effort, too, one has to follow the same median way.

A horseman, for instance, watches the speed of his mount and whenever it goes faster than he wants, he reins it back. On the other hand, whenever the horse shows signs of slowing down, he spurs it on and thus keeps to an even speed. Even so should one cultivate right effort, neither overdoing it, lest one be flurried, nor becoming slack lest one become slothful. Like the horseman one should always be prudent in one's effort.

When the strings of the lute are overstrung, or too slack, it is not in tune and not playable. If, on the other hand, the strings are neither overstrung nor too slack, but keyed to the middle pitch, then it is in tune and playable. Even so, effort when too strenuous leads to flurry, and when too slack to indolence.<sup>29</sup> Understanding the balancing of the five faculties—faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom (*saddhā*, *virīya*, *sati*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*)—one should grasp at the aim by uniformity of effort.

### Clear Comprehension

In this context it must also be noted that in the Buddhist texts the word mindfulness (*sati*) is often used with another word of equal significance, "clear comprehension" (*sampajañña*). The compound word "*sati-sampajañña*" occurs frequently in the discourses. Mindfulness and clear comprehension are co-operative. It is clear comprehension of one's activities and bodily movements.

The meditator who is mindful of his bodily activities becomes aware of his postures: when going (walking), standing, sitting or lying down, he is aware of the postures. All his bodily activities he does with mindfulness:

"In walking to and fro, in looking ahead and in looking aside, he applies clear comprehension (*sampajānakāri hoti*); in bending and stretching he applies clear comprehension; in wearing clothes, in eating, drinking, chewing, savouring, in answering the calls of nature, he applies clear comprehension; walking, standing, sitting, lying

down (*sutte*), in keeping awake (*jāgarite*), speaking, and being silent, he applies clear comprehension." "Sutte"—as a posture—implies "in lying down" but strictly rendered it would mean "in sleeping" or "in falling asleep." A meditator lies down with his mind on the *kammaṭṭhāna*, subject of meditation, and thus falls asleep undeluded.

"Jāgarite": in waking, or in keeping awake. In waking up, the application of mindfulness would mean taking up the *kammaṭṭhāna*, immediately, even before one opens up one's eyes. The term can also apply to such situations as (i) keeping awake mindfully (not allowing sleep to overcome one) when one is intent on meditating in the sleeping posture (due to illness or other physical disabilities), and (ii) on sleepless nights when one vainly struggles to "catch" elusive sleep, mindfulness and clear comprehension would help one to accept the situation with calmness and understand the cause of insomnia. In that very calmness and understanding, perhaps, sleep will come on its own.

In the widest sense the words "*sutte*" and "*jāgarite*" (in sleeping and in keeping awake) go beyond the question of postures since one can be sleeping on a seat or while standing. In the highest sense one sleeps when one is under the sway of *kilesas* or defilements.<sup>30</sup> Likewise the word "*jāgarite*" in its widest application, embraces that salutary wakefulness which characterises vigilance (*appamāda*). As the Buddha says: "The defilements disappear (are destroyed) of those who are ever vigilant, who train themselves day and night (*ahorattānusikkhitā*) who are wholly intent on Nibbāna."<sup>31</sup>

Thus in all activities, the meditator should be mindful and wide awake. Hear these words of the Buddha: "Mindfulness, O monks, I declare, is essential in all things everywhere."<sup>32</sup> "It is as salt to curry."<sup>33</sup> Further says the Buddha: "Mindfulness, verily, brings great profit."<sup>34</sup>

One has to understand the question of mindfulness and clear comprehension in a wider sense. Of course the fourfold effort already mentioned is a good safeguard. Mindfulness has to be spread over all situations at the outset so that its calmness helps one to take stock of a situation wisely. But (as an aspect of the Middle Path itself) *upon occasion* one has to exert the fourfold effort, even the vigorous type



as given in Vitakkasanthāna Sutta,<sup>35</sup> that is, when bare awareness is in itself insufficient.

The suttas tell us the interesting story of the Thera Mahā Phussa. Practising mindfulness he was always watching his thoughts. If while walking an evil thought were to occupy his mind, he would stop and would not proceed until the evil thought had been got rid of. People who noticed this used to wonder whether he had lost his way, or lost something on the way. Later, through constant practice of mindfulness and clear comprehension, he achieved his wish, attained purity of mind, and became an Arahāt, a man without taints. This indicates that the ancients were aware of their thoughts not only when seated in a given posture at a particular time for meditation, but always.

### The Art of Relaxing

If you do your sitting meditation for a considerable time, you may need to ease your aching limbs. Then you can start your walking meditation. Walk slowly, mindful of the movements. Now you need not think of the breath but become aware of the walk. If your mind wanders, give attention to your walking without getting involved in other thoughts. If you stop, turn or look round, be mindful and apply clear comprehension. When your foot touches the ground, you get a sensation; become aware of it. Walking also is an exercise in mindfulness.

When we are following a meditation course, let us try to be mindful always, everywhere when sitting, standing, walking, working, eating, and so forth, let us be mindful.

If your limbs get numbed while in meditation, rub and stretch them. You can also relax in a lying down position; this you may do at the end of a sitting meditation. Lie on your back on a flat surface, and try to avoid using a pillow or cushion under your head. *Keep your legs stretched out slightly apart and arms loosely by your sides, keep your eyes shut. Do not go to deep thinking, but allow your mind to relax, and not wander. Relax each muscle, be completely relaxed for a few minutes. At times you may fall asleep for a couple of minutes! At the end of the relaxation you get up feeling fit.* This type of relaxation you could do, not only during meditation hours, but at any time you feel fatigued or when you have the inclination to relax.

### The Fairest Girl

The practice of clear comprehension regarding the postures of the body helps us to remove discursive thoughts, improves our power of concentration and develops awareness and heedfulness.

The Buddha gives a very striking parable to emphasize the importance of developing mindfulness relating to body:

"Suppose, monks, a large crowd gathers together crying: 'Oh, the fairest girl, a country beauty!' Then, monks, that most beautiful girl, expert in dancing and singing, displays all her charms, and still a large crowd flocks together crying, 'Oh, the fairest girl is dancing, she is singing.'

"Then comes a man fond of his life, not fond of death, in love with pleasure and not with pain, and they say unto him: 'Look here, my man! Here is a bowl brimful of oil. You should carry it between the multitude and the fairest girl. Right on your heels comes a man with uplifted sword. If you were to spill a drop, off goes your head!'

"Now what do you think, monks? Would that man, not paying serious attention to that bowl of oil, give his mind to things outside and become careless?"

"Surely not, Venerable Sir."

"Well, monks, this is a parable I have made to make clear the meaning (what I have to say). This is the meaning of it: The bowl brimful of oil, monks, is a term for mindfulness relating to the body. Wherefore, monks, thus must you train yourselves: 'Mindfulness relating to the body shall be cultivated by us, shall be made much of, made a vehicle (of expression), established, made effective. It shall be increased and well applied.'

"Thus, monks, must you train yourselves."<sup>36</sup>

The section on body contemplation (*kāyānupassanā*) includes not only *ānāpānasati* (i.e. only the first tetrad of its sixteen steps), but also other types such as the reflection on the repulsiveness of the body (*asubha*).



## Beauty is Skin Deep

As the discourse explains, the meditator reflects on this very body encased by the skin and full of impurities from the soles up and from the hair of the head down thinking thus: "There are in this body, hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, flesh, sinews, bones, etc. Thus he lives contemplating foulness in this body."

This may not be a subject of meditation quite agreeable to the Westerner. The young in the East or West, in particular, do not like to regard the body as foul. However, whether we like it or not, if we dispassionately review this "fathom-long body" we will not see anything beautiful in it such as pearls and gems, etc., but only a heap of repulsive parts. "Beauty is skin deep." Young or old it is good to understand the real nature of this body, and the fact that we all confront *birth, ageing and death*. We live, love and laugh, yet our life is dark with ageing, smothered with death, bound up with change, and these qualities are so inherent in it—even as greenness is to grass, and bitterness to quinine that not all the magic and power of science can ever transform it.

"Like as the damask rose you see,  
Or like the blossom on the tree,  
Or like the dainty flower of May  
Or like the morning to the day  
Or like the sun, or like the shade,  
Or like ground which Jonas had—  
Even such is man, whose thread is spun,  
Drawn out, and out, and so is done.

The rose withers, the blossom blasteth,  
The flower fades, the morning hasteth,  
The sun sets, the shadow flies,  
The gourd consumes; and man he dies.

Even such is man, who lives by breath,  
Is here, now there: so life and death.

Even such is man, who heaps up sorrow,  
Lives but this day and dies tomorrow.  
The song is short, the journey's so,

The pear doth rot, the plum doth fall,  
The snow dissolves, and so must all."<sup>37</sup>

This view of life is neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but realistic. Do not think that the Buddhist outlook on life and the world is a gloomy one, and that the Buddhist is in low spirits. Far from it, he smiles as he walks through life.

From the contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) let us now proceed to contemplation of feelings or sensations (*vedanānupassanā*). In this meditation we are expected to become mindful of our feelings: pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. When experiencing a pleasant feeling, the meditator knows that it is a pleasant feeling because he is mindful of the feeling. The same with regard to all other feelings. He tries to experience each feeling as it really is.

Generally, people are depressed when they are experiencing unpleasant feelings and are elated by pleasant feelings. This mental exercise of mindfulness helps a man to experience all feelings with a detached outlook, with equanimity and to avoid becoming a slave to sensations. Through insight meditation (*vipassanā*) he also learns to realize that there is only a feeling, a sensation. That, too, is not lasting and there is no permanent entity or "self" that feels.

The contemplation of mind (*cittānupassanā*), which is the third type of mindfulness, speaks to us of the importance of studying our own mind, of being aware of our diverse thoughts. Thoughts in this context are those of lust, hatred and delusion, which are the root causes of all wrong doing, and their opposites that counteract those unwholesome states of mind. Rather than thoughts of lust it concerns lust as a state of mind (*sarāgaṃ cittam*, etc.).

The meditator tries to know through mindfulness both the wholesome states of mind and the unwholesome states of mind. He sees them without attachment or aversion. This kind of dispassionate discernment of the mind makes a man understand the real function of his mind, its real nature and behaviour. Those who practise contemplation of the mind learn to control the mind.

A feature of the modern world is its superficiality. Modern man will object, but if he makes an impartial introspection, he cannot deny



this. Modern man does not pause to think deeply. External appearance goes a great way with him. See the extent to which modern man is influenced by advertisements and shopwindow exhibitions. If these did not influence him, shopowners would not spend the enormous sums they do on advertisements. Buddhist meditation has a cure for this superficiality: *cittānupassanā*, mindfulness of thought or contemplation of mind.

Modern man does very little independent thinking. He seldom forms his own views. The style of dress he adopts, the brand of articles he buys, is decided for him by advertisers. How easily he is moved by the shouting of slogans. Slogans and political propaganda mould man's mind, and life tends to be mechanical; man has become a puppet controlled by others.

Modern man has become enmeshed in all sorts of ideas, views, opinions and ideologies both wise and foolish. He is film-fed, television-minded, and radio-trained. Today what is presented by the newspapers, radio, television, some novels and pictures, by certain literature on sex, psychology and by sex-ridden films tend to confuse man, and turn him from the path of rectitude and understanding.

But the man who practises mindfulness will be protected from the subtle persuasive power of advertisement or the shouts of the propagandists, or the dramatic effects of mass movements.

Another weakness of modern man is his desire for change and for quick results. The absence of calm in him is a great deficiency. Calm begets mental strength. Absence of calm begets impatience and the impatient man is never satisfied. He always wants something new and startling. He is disappointed if he takes up the morning newspaper and finds no banner headlines.

Modern man craves for variety. He craves for sensations, he is fed on sensations. He continually yearns for something fresh, for new methods, new machinery, new drugs, a new way of life, a new ideology. There is no end to this. This modern attitude is symptomatic of a disease—*the disease of mental unrest*.

Here again the practice of mindfulness is the much needed cure. Mindfulness leads to calmness, and calmness gives an even tone to

one's life. Trained in calmness, he will shed a host of unnecessary desires. He will "walk through the uneven with an even stride" (*visame samam caranti*).<sup>38</sup>

The contemplation of the mind also makes us realise that what we call mind is only an ever-changing process consisting of changing mental factors and that there is no abiding entity called ego or self.

The fourth and the last type of mindfulness is the contemplation of mental objects or mind contents (*dhammānupassanā*). This covers all the essential Dhamma, the teaching of the Buddha, most of which are discussed in *The Buddha's Ancient Path* by the present writer.

The contemplation of mental objects is not mere thinking or deliberation—rather it goes hand in hand with mindfulness in discerning mind objects as and when they arise and cease (*samudayavaya*). When, for example, sense desire is present in him the meditator knows: "There is sense desire in me," or when sense desire is absent, he knows: "There is no sense desire in me," and so on. The same with regard to the other hindrances (*nīvaraṇāni*).<sup>39</sup>

In the same manner he discerns with mindfulness the five aggregates of clinging (*pañca-upādānakkhandhā*)—body or material form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness

He discerns with mindfulness the six internal and the six external sense-bases. Herein the meditator knows well the eye, the visible form and the fetter<sup>40</sup> that arises dependent on both (the eye and form); he knows well the ear and sounds ... the nose and smells ... tongue and savours ... the body and tactile objects ... the mind and mind objects, and knows well the fetter arising dependent on both. He also knows the ceasing of the fetter.

Similarly he discerns the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta-bojjhanga*)<sup>41</sup> and the Four Noble Truths (*cattāri ariyasaccāni*). The Four Noble Truths in this context are not intellectual categories to be cogitated upon, but palpable illustrations of them which the meditator comes across and identifies.

*Thus he lives mindfully investigating and understanding the mental objects. He lives independent, clinging to nothing in the world.*



*The fourfold mindfulness is a teaching (Dhamma) on which all aspects of the Dhamma converge.*

The description of each type of mindfulness in the discourse ends with the words: "*He lives independent clinging to nothing in the world*"; for "*everything when clung to fails*."<sup>42</sup> This is the result aimed at by the meditator to be achieved by the earnest and ever zealous. "Lives independent" means aloof from craving and wrong views (*taṇhā, diṭṭhi*). Here "world" means the world of being, one's own psycho-physical organism. He does not cling to this process of mind and body and regard it as a permanent ego entity or self.

### The Simile of the Raft

It is because of our greed, our craving, that we cling to people and things. If we can practise the art of dealing with things with a detached outlook, then we learn to let go. Our bonds are not in the sense organs or in sense objects. They are due to our greed that arises when the sense organs come in contact with sense objects.<sup>43</sup> So the problem and solution, the malady and the remedy, lie within. Learn the art of giving up. It is hard to live clinging to nothing in the world and our efforts to reach such spiritual heights may appear impossible. Yet it is possible and worth striving for again and again; for by dint of effort and hard work, many have attained those heights in this very life. "*Sow a thought and you reap a deed. Sow a deed, and you reap a habit. Sow a habit, and you reap a character. Sow a character, and you reap a destiny—for character is destiny.*"

In this connection it is interesting to know the Buddha's simile of the raft.<sup>44</sup> Let us listen to him:

"Using the simile of a raft, monks, I teach the Dhamma designed for crossing over and not for retaining. Listen and attend carefully to what I say."

"Yes, Venerable Sir," the monks replied. The Buddha continued:

"Monks, a man sets out on a journey and comes to a vast stretch of water. The near bank is beset with fears and dangers, the far bank is safe. But no boat goes to the further shore and there is no bridge. He thinks: 'Vast, indeed, is this stretch of water, the near bank is unsafe

but the further one is without danger. I had better collect grass, leaves, branches and wood to make a raft and with its aid using my hands and feet, ferry myself across to the further shore.'

"Then, monks, that man having made a raft crosses over safely to the further shore striving with his hands and feet. Having crossed he thinks: 'This raft has been very useful, for with its aid I have reached the further bank safely. I had better carry it on my head or back and go wherever I want.'

"What do you think, monks, if he does this is he acting rightly about the raft?"

"No, indeed, Lord."

"Suppose that man who has crossed over to the further bank should think: 'This raft has been very useful, with its aid I have reached the further bank safely. I had better beach it, or let it float down the vast stretch of water and go wherever I want.' If he acts thus, monks, he would be acting rightly about the raft. *Even so, monks, using the simile of a raft have I taught the Dhamma designed for crossing over, and not for retaining. You, monks, who understand the Dhamma taught by using the simile of the raft, have to give up good things (dhamma); how much more the evil things (a-dhamma).*"

It is interesting to note that the word "*dhamma*" here, according to the Commentary, means calm or concentration of mind (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). Clinging even to such high mental attainments as these should be given up. Need one speak of evil things?

### Subjective and Objective Looking

In the Satipatthāna Sutta mindfulness is specially concerned with just four things: *body, feelings, mind and mental objects*. The contemplation of the body makes us realise the true nature of the body, without any pretence, by analysing it right down to its ultimates, its fundamental elements. This mental scrutiny of our own body helps us to understand that it is a process without any underlying substance or core that may be taken as permanent and lasting.

A special feature of this all-important mental factor of mindfulness is that it involves a method of looking at things objectively rather



than subjectively. So it is important to know the difference between objective and subjective looking. The practice of all the four types of meditation on setting up of mindfulness is done objectively without any subjective reaction. One should not be an interested observer, but a bare observer, to practise mindfulness. Then only can one see the object in its proper perspective, as it really is, and not as it appears to be.

When you observe a thing subjectively, your mind gets involved in it, you tend to identify yourself with it. You judge, evaluate, appraise and comment on it. Such subjective looking colours your observation. *So in the practice of the four types of mindfulness, that is, mindfulness of body, of feelings, of the mind, and of mental objects, one should contemplate it without any biases, prejudices, likes and dislikes and other preconceived considerations and notions. In other words, mindfulness should be practised in an objective way as if you are observing the object from outside.*

When “contemplating the body in the body” (*kaye kāyānupassī*) you do not contemplate feelings, states of mind, or mental objects concerning your body, but only the body itself. In this connection we should take to heart the precise and clear way the Buddha taught Bāhiya. Bāhiya was the leader of a religious sect who assumed himself to be an Arahāt, a consummate one. But later, on the advice of another, he went to the Buddha to learn the technique, the process, whereby one can become an Arahāt. Knowing that Bāhiya was a man of understanding, the Buddha taught him the technique in these words:

“Bāhiya, thus should you train yourself: ‘*In what is seen there should be to you only the seen; in the heard there should be only the heard; in what is sensed (as smell, taste and touch) there should be only what is sensed; in the cognizing there should be only the cognizing.*’”

Here the idea of “I am seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and cognizing” is removed. The “I” concept, the ego-illusion, drops away. This kind of attention removes tension, it calms and relaxes the mind, and that is the reason why meditators do not need much sleep. Let alone deep meditation, many do not know the art of seeing even a natural phenomena; for they have not trained themselves in observing things objectively.

Suppose you are gazing at a gorgeous sunset. If you start commenting, judging, and observing it subjectively, then you are not seeing the sunset, you do not really see its beauty.

But if you view it objectively with a calm and quiet mind, with complete attention, then you will see the beauty of the sunset in all its fullness, and also that the so called beauty is ephemeral, impermanent and ever changing. This applies to many other things. If you can look at a rose or a lotus objectively without any subjective reaction, then you will see. If you are a lover of music and if you listen to music with undivided attention, you may enjoy the music more than the musician does.

### Calm and Insight

Even the higher practice of calming concentration (*samādhi*) does not place the meditator in a position of security; for the underlying defilements or latent tendencies (*anusaya*) are not removed. They are in abeyance. At any moment they may re-appear when circumstances permit, and plague his mind if right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration wane. As he still has the impurities, unwholesome impulses latent in his mental make-up, he is not yet in a state of absolute security. He has gained calm of mind through *samādhi* or concentration. However, it is through *vipassanā*, insight meditation, that the latent defilements are rooted out of his mind. So the meditator training himself in virtue and concentration, develops *vipassanā* or insight.

The development of concentrative calm, *samādhi*, is thus never an end in itself. It is only a means to something more sublime which is of vital importance, namely, insight, *vipassanā*. In other words, it is a means to gain right understanding, the first factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. Though only a means to an end, *samādhi* plays an important role in the path. It is also known as *citta-visuddhi*, purity of mind, which is brought about by the stilling of hindrances.<sup>45</sup> The Buddha says: "Develop calm, the disciple who has gained calm sees things as they really are" (*samādhim bhāvētha, samāhito yathā bhūtaṃ pajānāti*).<sup>46</sup>



"Two things (*dhammā*), monks, should be developed for the understanding of lust, hatred and delusion ... What two? Calm and insight. These two things should be developed for the abandonment, extinction and cessation of lust, hatred and delusion ..." <sup>47</sup>

Further says the Buddha: "Two things, monks, partake of knowledge (*viññā-bhāgiyā*): calm and insight; when calm is developed, mind is developed; through developed mind, lust is abandoned. When insight is developed, wisdom is developed. Through developed insight, ignorance is abandoned. The mind polluted with lust is not liberated. When there is pollution through ignorance, wisdom is not developed."

Thus deliverance of the mind (*ceto vimutti*) is due to the mind being cleansed from lust. Deliverance through wisdom (*paññā-vimutti*) is due to the mind being cleansed from ignorance. <sup>48</sup>

From the foregoing it is obvious that calm and insight, in other words, right concentration and right understanding of the path, cannot be separated. Together they support each other. Without a certain measure of concentrative calm, no insight can be developed and without some measure of insight, no concentration can be developed. They are inseparable; this fact is explained by the Buddha thus:

"No concentration is there for the unwise,  
No wisdom in one who lacks concentration;  
In whom there is concentration and wisdom,  
He truly is in Nibbāna's neighbourhood." <sup>49</sup>

## Understanding Ourselves

The meditator who gains deep concentration of mind through mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing, now directs his thoughts to insight meditation (*vipassanā bhāvanā*). In this context *vipassanā*, or insight, means understanding things as they really are, that is seeing the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and non-substantial (non-self) nature of the five aggregates of clinging. In plain language it is understanding ourselves. It is not easy for us to understand ourselves because of our wrong concepts, baseless illusions, perversions and delusions. It is so difficult to see the real person. Through *vipassanā*

one endeavours to remove the illusions (*māyā*), concepts (*paññatti*) and perversions (*vipallāsa*) and see ourselves as we really are.

When the meditator has advanced in his breathing meditation, when his mind is calmed through stilling the hindrances, he can see the impermanent nature of his own breath: its rise and fall like the waves of the sea. Now based on the impermanent breath, he endeavours to understand the impermanent nature of the five aggregates of clinging. The analysis of the so called being into the five ever-changing aggregates makes it clear that there is nothing abiding, nothing eternally conserved in this so called being—this process of mind and body. One has also to take to heart the sequence between mindfulness (*sati*), analysis of the Dhamma (*dhamma-vicaya*), effort (*viriya*) and so forth, in the factors of enlightenment, mentioned in the fourth type of mindfulness (*dhammānupassanā*). Mindfully one analyzes the dhamma. Here "*dhamma*" means one's mind and body. For this one needs determination and the fourfold effort<sup>50</sup> to have a clear picture of the function of the mental factors, to overcome the unwholesome and maintain the wholesome thoughts. As the meditator proceeds with indefatigable zeal analysing the mind and body, seeing with insight what is beyond the naked eye, there arises unalloyed joy (*āradha viriyassa uppajjati pīti nirāmisā*).<sup>51</sup>

Change or impermanence (*anicca*) is the essential characteristic of phenomenal existence. We cannot say of anything, animate or inanimate, "this is lasting"; for even while we say this, it is undergoing change. The aggregates are compounded and conditioned, and therefore ever subject to cause and effect. Unceasingly does mind and its factors change, and just as unceasingly, though at a lower rate, the physical body also changes from moment to moment. "He who sees clearly that the impermanent aggregates are impermanent, has right understanding."<sup>52</sup>

The Buddha gives five very striking similes to illustrate the impermanent nature of the five aggregates of clinging. He compares material form or body to a lump of foam, feeling to a bubble, perception to a mirage, mental formations or volitional activities to a plantain trunk which is pithless, without heartwood and consciousness to an illusion. He asks:



"What essence, monks, could there be in a lump of foam, in a bubble, in a mirage, in a plantain trunk, in an illusion?" Continuing, the Buddha says:

"Whatever material form there be whether past, future or present; internal or external; gross or subtle; low or lofty; far or near; that material form the meditator sees, meditates upon, examines with systematic and wise attention (*yonsio manasikāra*), he thus seeing, meditating upon, and examining with systematic and wise attention, would find it empty, unsubstantial and without essence. What essence, monks, could there be in material form?" The Buddha speaks in the same manner of the remaining aggregates and asks: "What essence, monks, could there be in feeling, in perception, in mental formations and in consciousness?"

Thus we see that a more advanced range of thought comes with the analysis of the five aggregates of clinging. It is at this stage that right understanding, insight (*vipassanā*) begins to work. It is through this insight that the true nature of the aggregates is grasped and seen in the light of the three signs or characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*), namely: impermanence, suffering or unsatisfactoriness and not-self. The Master explains it thus:

"The five aggregates, monks, are impermanent (*anicca*); whatever is impermanent, that is *dukkha*, unsatisfactory; that is without self (*anattā*), that is not mine, that I am not, that is not my self. Thus should it be seen by perfect wisdom (*sammappaññāya*) as it really is. He who sees by perfect wisdom as it really is, his mind not grasping, is detached from taints, he is liberated."<sup>53</sup>

It is not only the five aggregates that are impermanent, unsatisfactory and without a self, but the causes and conditions that produce the aggregates are also impermanent, unsatisfactory and without a self. This point the Buddha makes clear:

"Material form, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness, monks, are impermanent; whatever causes and conditions there are for the arising of these aggregates, they too are impermanent. How, monks, could aggregates, arising from what is impermanent be permanent?"<sup>54</sup> "What is impermanent is not worth rejoicing, not worth approval, not worth clinging to ..." <sup>55</sup>

We actually live for one moment only, and the next moment, it is another life. Thus the duration of life, in the ultimate sense, is for one moment only. This is sometimes referred to as the instantaneousness of life. There is a living and dying every moment. Today is the tomorrow we spoke of yesterday. The meditative mind unrelated to the past and to the future is capable of living with clarity and reason in the world.

The essence of *vipassanā* meditation is in the experience, not in sermons and books on meditation, though they have their advantages. Do not cling to any goal or results of meditation. This is a practice without any attachment to anything material, mental or spiritual; for all things when clung to fail. Be ever vigilant and mindful. The Discourse on Setting Up of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*) repeats the saying: "He lives independent, clinging to nothing in the world" (*anissito ca viharati na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*). This is the result a meditator gains.

### Removing Perversions

It is always when we fail to see the true nature of things that our views become clouded. Because of our likes and dislikes, we fail to see the sense organs and sense objects objectively and in their proper perspective and go after mirages, illusions and deceptions. The sense organs delude and mislead us and then we fail to see things in their true light as a result of which our way of seeing things becomes perverted.

The delusion of mind mistakes the unreal for the real, the passing shadows for permanence, and the result is confusion, conflict, disharmony and perpetual sorrow.

When a man is caught up in these illusions, he perceives, thinks and views incorrectly.

He perceives permanence in the impermanent; pleasure in pain; self in what is not self; beauty in the repulsive. He thinks and views in the same erroneous manner. Thus each perversion works in four ways,<sup>56</sup> and leads man astray, clouds his vision and confuses him. He is deluded by his own senses. This is due to unwise reflection, unsystematic attention (*ayoniso-manasikāra*). He who cannot see the true nature of this world, its ways, its tendencies, the inevitable fruit of



actions, and he who cannot see that life is not permanent and lacking in true happiness, and who, therefore, still clings to the world, is too young yet in life. He has to mature in right understanding before the *Buddhadhamma* has a message for him. His veils of lust, self-conceit and delusion are thick and strong. The terrible dangers of the world of life lay in the understanding of life; for everything here pertaining to world changes; there is no exception, one can rely on nothing.

Right understanding or insight alone removes these illusions and helps man to cognize the real nature that underlies all appearance. It is only when man comes out of this cloud of illusions and perversions that he shines with true wisdom like the full moon that emerges brilliant from behind a black cloud.

When discussing the three-fold training: virtue, concentration and wisdom, leading to final deliverance and complete mental purity, it is important to understand how man's latent or underlying tendencies function.

When the defilements lie dormant in the recesses of man's mind, they are called latent, underlying or hidden (*anusaya*).<sup>57</sup> They are dormant so long as they are not fed. The five sense organs with the mind as the sixth, provide the necessary food in the form of visible objects, sounds, smell, taste, touch and mental objects. These six kinds of food can be either agreeable or offensive. In either case, sense objects act as stimulants, and no sooner are the latent tendencies thus stimulated than they rise to the surface. This uprising of the tendencies is known as *pariyuṭṭhāna* or *samudāgata*. When they are thus awakened and aroused, they tend to escape, and seek an outlet. If man fails to exercise systematic wise attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*) and calm down the risen tendencies, they escape either through the doors of speech or deed or through both, and that is called transgression or going beyond (*vītikāma*).

Of these three stages of the tendencies, the third, that is the "transgression stage," is coarse, the second, the "risen stage," is fine, and the first, or the "latent stage," is still finer. The three weapons to overcome them and to deliver the mind from their grip are *virtue, concentration and wisdom*.

Through virtue or *sīla* all bodily and verbal ill actions are brought under control, and the transgression stage is checked. It is true, even for training verbal and physical acts a certain measure of mental discipline is needed, though not necessarily intense and serious meditation.

Man may, through *sīla*, be calm and composed verbally and physically, but not in mind; he lacks concentration, *samādhi*. Virtue cannot control the mind, though it is an asset to mental calm. Concentration with the aid of wise attention subdues the second type of tendencies thus preventing them from escaping. Concentration, however, is incapable of removing the latent tendencies. It is through wisdom, which is insight, *vipassanā*, that all impulses, all tendencies are completely eradicated. And then no more can a man be confused by the terrible, or swept off his feet by the glamour of things ephemeral. No more is it possible for him to have a clouded view of phenomena; for he has transcended all capacity for error through perfect immunity which *vipassanā* alone can grant. And this is *deliverance* (*vimutti*), the stepping out (*nissaraṇa*) from the vicious circle of *saṃsāra*, repeated existence. Let us now call to mind the proclamation of the Buddha in the opening lines of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta:

*Satipaṭṭhāna is the one and only way for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the abandoning of pain and grief, for reaching the right path and realising Nibbāna.*

### Summing Up

As we discussed earlier, the starting point in the Dispensation of the Buddha (*Buddha-sāsana*) is *sīla*, virtuous behaviour. Standing on the firm ground of *sīla*, the meditator should endeavour to discipline the fickle mind. The Buddha pointed out to his disciples ways and means of overcoming verbal and physical ill behaviour. By taming his tongue, controlling his bodily actions, and making himself pure in the way he earns his living, the meditator establishes himself well in moral habits. While thus restraining himself in word and deed, he tries to guard the doors of the senses; for if he lacks control over his senses, unhealthy thoughts are bound to fill his mind. He maintains his balance putting away all likes and dislikes. This control of the senses



he practises with zest. He eats moderately and mindfully and is devoted to wakefulness.

Now if he is earnest and mindful, he will advance without faltering and start the more difficult task of meditation. Taking up a subject of meditation that suits his temperament and continuing with it without stopping, he gains concentrative calm by overcoming the hindrances which obstruct the meditation. Thus the meditator who strives mindfully gains control over his fickle mind. With his speech, actions and sense organs subjugated and his mind under control, he has now gained self-mastery.

Thus training himself in virtue and concentration (*sīla-sikkhā* and *samādhi-sikkhā*), he now tries to gain true wisdom or insight by seeing all things as they really are (*yathābhūtam*). Viewing things as they really are implies, as we have discussed above, seeing the transient, unsatisfactory and selfless nature of all conditioned and component things. To such a meditative disciple of the Buddha, the "world" is not the external or empirical world, but the human body with its consciousness—the world of the five aggregates of clinging. It is this that he tries to understand as impermanent, unsatisfactory and without self or ego entity. It is to this world of body and mind that the Buddha referred when he said to Mogharāja: "Ever mindful, Mogharāja, see the world as void (*suñña*)—having given up the notion of a self (underlying it)—so may one overcome Māra (death.)"<sup>60</sup>

The *vipassanā* method implies gaining knowledge by direct observation. It goes beyond the intellect, beyond theory, beyond conceptual interpretation, to the actual experiencing of life itself.

Thus comprehending things as they really are, thus realising the true nature of the five aggregates of clinging, by washing out the impurities of his mind, he "lives independent, clinging to nothing in the world."

The reader will note that in this self-purification and self-mastery for final deliverance, there is no coercion or compulsion by any external agency, there are no rewards or punishments for deeds done or left undone. Deliverance from mental taints lies absolutely and entirely in one's own hands, not in someone else's—be it human or divine. The door is free of all bolts and bars except those that man

himself has made. Not even a supreme Buddha can deliver a man from the fetters of existence except by showing him the path. The path is virtue, concentration and wisdom.

All life's problems can be reduced to one single problem, that of *dukkha*, suffering or unsatisfactoriness. And the solution put forward by the Buddhas or Enlightened Ones of all ages is the Noble Eightfold Path. The efficiency of this path lies in the practice of it. The Buddha's meditation path, which is the Noble Eightfold Path, still beckons the weary pilgrim to the haven of Nibbāna's security and peace. "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step" and as the old saying goes: "Some run swiftly; some walk; some creep painfully; but all who keep on will reach the goal."



## ADDENDUM I

## Thus Have I Heard

Then a certain monk visited the Buddha, saluted him and sat on one side. Having saluted, he said to the Buddha: "They say, Lord, 'Living according to the Dhamma' (*dhamma-vihāri*). Lord, how does a monk live according to the Dhamma?"

1. "Here, O monk, a monk masters the Dhamma (the teaching of the Buddha) and spends the day in that mastery, does not go into solitude, does not practise mind concentration. That monk is said to be intensely bent on study, but he lives not according to the Dhamma.
2. "Again, O monk, a monk teaches others the Dhamma in detail as he has heard it, as he has mastered it; he spends the day convincing others of the Dhamma, does not go into solitude, does not practise concentration of mind. That monk is said to be intent on convincing others, but he lives not according to the Dhamma.
3. "Again, O monk, a monk repeats the Dhamma in detail as he has heard it, as he has mastered it, he spends the day in that repetition, does not go into solitude, does not practise mind concentration. That monk is said to be intent on repeating, but he lives not according to the Dhamma.
4. "Again, O monk, a monk turns his mind to the Dhamma, ponders over it, reflects on it, as he has heard it, as he has mastered it; he spends the day in thinking about the Dhamma, but he lives not according to the Dhamma.
5. "But, O monk, a monk masters the Dhamma, but does not spend the day in that mastery; he goes into solitude and practises mind concentration. Verily, O monk, such a monk lives according to the Dhamma.

"O monk, thus, indeed, have I declared: one intent on study, one intent on convincing others, one intent on repeating, one intent on thinking and one who lives according to the Dhamma.

“What should be done by a teacher for his disciples out of love and compassion, that has been done by me for you. Here are tree-roots, empty places; meditate, O monks, do not be heedless, do not have any regrets afterwards: This is my exhortation to you” (Anguttara Nikāya, Pañcaka Nipāta 73).



## ADDENDUM II

## The Art of Noble Living

*(Brahma-vihāra)*

*Brahma-vihāra* is another subject of meditation that is beneficial to practise. The word "*brahma*" can be rendered as excellent, lofty, sublime or noble, and *vihāra*, "as states of living." *Brahma-vihāra*, therefore, means, sublime states; some call it "divine abodes." It can also be called "the art of noble living."

There are four *brahma-vihāras*, namely:

Lovingkindness or universal love (*mettā*)

Compassion (*karuṇā*)

Sympathetic joy, altruistic or appreciative joy (*muditā*)

Equanimity (*upekkhā*).

These are excellent virtues conducive to noble living. They banish selfishness and disharmony and promote altruism, unity and brotherhood. They are also known as boundless states or illimitables (*appamaññāyo*) because they are virtues to be extended towards all beings, without exception, irrespective of race, caste, colour, community, creed, East or West.

*Subha-vimokkha* is another term by which these qualities of the heart are known. It means deliverance of the mind (*vimokkha*) through recognition of the good (*subha*) in others. Instead of seeing the evil in others, the meditator sees the good in them and cultivates the four sublime states.

Latent in the human mind are defilements of diverse type, so it is natural for man to entertain unwholesome thoughts. However, each and every defilement has its opposite virtue; thus it is possible to develop a virtue to overcome and eliminate a defilement. When developing the sublime states no living being is to be excluded. These qualities make no distinction between man and man as high and low, rich and poor, strong and weak, wise and unwise, dark and fair, brahmin and *candāla*, or as Christian, Hindu, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, etc.; for these sublime states, as we saw above, are boundless, and no sooner do we try to keep men apart on the basis of false distinctions,

than the feeling of separateness creeps in and these boundless qualities become limited, contrary to the high ideals they represent.

The *brahma-vihāra* can also be taken as subjects of meditation, then they are called "*brahma-vihāra bhāvanā*," "the meditative developments of the sublime states." By cultivating these positive virtues one can maintain a calm and pure mind.

When practising meditation on the *brahma-vihāras*, it is easier to start with oneself. For instance, when meditating on love, proceed thus: "May I be well, may I be happy; may I be free from illness, may no harm come to me," and so forth. Then think of a teacher, a friend, an indifferent person and lastly an enemy (if any, but one should not create an enemy), and radiate thoughts of love towards them. It may appear very difficult to extend love to an enemy, but this difficult thing one has to do to remove discrimination. Love should be extended to all without any compromising limitations.

You may ask why love should be radiated to oneself. Is it not selfish to do so? Seemingly it may be, but by doing so it becomes easier to extend our love to others: "I like to be well and happy, so let other beings also be well and happy." "As I am so they are: as they are so am I," thus comparing self with others cultivate love towards all.<sup>61</sup>

Verse number 130 of the Dhammapada reads:

"All tremble at punishment,  
To all life is dear.  
Comparing others with oneself,  
One should neither kill nor cause to kill."

## I

### Loving-kindness (*Mettā*)

*Mettā* (Skt. *maitrī*) is the wish for the welfare and happiness of all beings, making no restriction whatsoever. It has the character of a benevolent friend. Its direct enemy is ill will or hatred while the indirect or masked enemy is carnal love, sensual attachment or selfish affectionate desire (*pema*) which is quite different from *mettā*. Carnal love when disguised as *mettā* can do much harm to oneself and others. We have to be on our guard against this masked enemy, sensuality and



greedy possessiveness. If the feeling of love is the direct result of attachment and clinging, then it is not really *mettā*.

To love someone means to develop an attachment to the loved one, and when the latter is equally fond of you, a bond is created, but when you are separated or when the dear one's affection towards you wanes, you become miserable and may even behave foolishly. In his formulation of the Noble Truth of Suffering, the Buddha says: "Association with the unloved is suffering, separation from the loved is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering." *Mettā*, however, is a very pure sublime state which, like quicksilver, cannot attach itself to anything.

It is difficult to love a person dispassionately, without clinging, without any idea of self, me and mine; for in man the notion of "I" is dominant, and to love without making any distinction between this and that, without barriers between persons, to regard all as sisters and brothers with a boundless heart, may appear to be almost impossible. But those who try even a little will be rewarded; it is worthwhile.

Vicious thoughts of animosity and hatred are most detrimental and harmful to those who harbour them. When people are angry, they can behave very much as the other animals do. They growl and bite, or cringe and fawn. This is due to man's ignorance. This is as true on the personal as it is on the international level.

*Mettā* is the best antidote for anger in ourselves. It is the best medicine for those who are angry with us. Let us extend love to all who need it with a free and boundless heart. Love is the language of the heart, a language that comes from the heart and goes to the heart. Love is a force linking heart with heart to heal, and uniting us in true companionship. Highly developed thoughts of *mettā* seem to possess magnetic power. By radiating such sublime thoughts it is possible to influence and win over people.

Through love one adds to the fund of human happiness, one makes the world brighter, nobler and purer and prepares it for the good life better than in any other way. There is no ill-luck worse than hatred it is said, and no safety from others' hostility greater than the heart of love, the heart in which hate is dead. Love is an active force. Every act of *mettā* is done with the stainless mind to help, to succour, to cheer,

to make the paths of others easier, smoother, and more adapted to the conquest of sorrow, the winning of the highest bliss.

The way to develop love is through thinking out the evils of hate, and the advantages of non-hate; through thinking out according to actuality, according to kamma, that really there is none to hate, that hate is a foolish way of feeling, which breeds more and more darkness, that obstructs right understanding.

Hatred restricts; love releases. Hatred strangles; love liberates. Hatred brings remorse; love brings peace. Hatred agitates; love quietens, stills, calms. Hatred divides; love unites. Hatred hardens; love softens. Hatred hinders; love helps. Thus one can use a correct study and appreciation of the effects of hatred and the benefits of love, as a basis for developing the meditation on loving-kindness.

### Love

As a mother loves her child,  
An only child,  
With love that knows no limit,  
Spreading wide,  
Measureless and immense—  
And, for it, will sacrifice  
Her very life—  
So let your love for all beings,  
East and west, north and south,  
Below, above—  
Extending and extending wide,  
Be immeasurable, exhaustless.  
Unfathomable.  
Chaste is such love,  
Not clinging—and so to fools  
'Tis incomprehensible;  
But the Seers understood,  
And understanding, knew full well  
Its golden worth.

(after Metta Sutta, trans. Kassapa Thera)



## II

Compassion (*Karuṇā*)

*Karuṇā* is defined as "the quality which makes the heart of the good man tremble and quiver at the distress of others," "the quality that rouses tender feelings in the good man at the sight of others' suffering." Cruelty or violence is the direct enemy of *karuṇā* while homely grief is the indirect or masked enemy. Though the latter may appear in the guise of a friend, it is not true *karuṇā*, but false sympathy; such sympathy is deceitful and one must try to distinguish true from false compassion. The compassionate man who refrains from harming and oppressing others and endeavours to relieve them of their distress, gives the gift of security to one and all, making no distinction whatsoever.

*Karuṇā* is loving-compassion. It is that sublime quality which makes the hearts of the noble quiver at the suffering of the world. *Karuṇā* has the characteristic of a mother whose thoughts, words and deeds tend to relieve the distress of her babe. It has the property of not being able to tolerate the sufferings of others, and the manifestation of perfect non-violence. Its consummation is the eradication of all cruelty. Its proximate cause is the sight of the forlorn state of those in distress.

By precept and example the Buddha was the Great Compassionate One (*Mahākāruṇika*). He radiated his great compassion towards all beings, and never encouraged wrangling, animosity and violence. Addressing the disciples he once said: "I quarrel not with the world, it is the world that quarrels with me. An exponent of the Dhamma does not quarrel with anyone in the world."<sup>62</sup> The entire dispensation of the Buddha is permeated with this sublime quality of *karuṇā*.

Goodness and violence cannot co-exist; goodness constructs while violence destroys. Compassion cannot be cultivated by one who is obsessed with thoughts of selfishness. It is the self-sacrificing man who fills his heart with pure thoughts of pity and wishes to help and serve others. The selfish cannot be of real service to others for their selfish motives prevent them from doing good. No sooner do they become selfish and self-possessed than they fail to soften their hearts.

Hard-heartedness is overcome by pity, by sympathy. If you remove compassion from the teachings of the Buddha, you remove the heart of Buddhism; for all virtues, all goodness and righteousness have compassion as their basis, as their matrix (*karuṇā nidhānam hi sīlam*).

All the virtues (*pāramitā*) that a Bodhisatta, one bent on Enlightenment, cultivates are initiated by compassion. Compassion is guided by wisdom and wisdom by compassion. They go hand in hand, they are the backbone of Buddhism, the guiding principles.

Compassion is surely not a flabby state of mind. It is a strong enduring thing. When a person is in distress, it is compassion that spurs us to action and incites us to rescue the distressed. And this needs strength of mind.

People are fascinated by a study of the various types of machinery which science has invented. What is urgently needed is a study of the machinery of the human mind. It is this study that can help to clear the misunderstanding between man and man.

As the poet says:

"Life is mostly froth and bubble,  
Two things stand like stone:  
Kindness in another's trouble,  
Courage in our own."

### III

#### Sympathetic Joy (*Muditā*)

Gladness at others' success is the third sublime state, known as *muditā*. It is not mere sympathy but sympathetic, altruistic or appreciative joy. Its direct enemy is jealousy and the indirect enemy is exhilaration. Jealousy is a vice that defiles our hearts and makes us unhappy.

When others are in distress we show our compassion, we sympathize with them and try to relieve them of their distress. But to appreciate another's success we need sympathetic joy. It is this quality of the heart that makes us rejoice over the success of others as we rejoice over our own.



Jealous people cannot feel happy when others are progressing, but they rejoice over the failures and misfortunes of others. Some parents feel jealous when others' children are doing well while their own are not successful. This is meaningless, and bears unpleasant fruit.

Jealousy is a vice shared by people of different walks of life—intellectuals, politicians and even men of large calibre. If that is so, need one speak of the poor and the illiterate? However, at times, the latter are more co-operative and unselfish.

Instead of entertaining thoughts of jealousy, we should work hard with determination to surmount obstacles and fulfil our hopes. Let us also bear in mind that our kamma, or moral causation also has a role to play in our lives.

*Muditā* is the congratulatory attitude of a person, it removes aversion. Through meditation and the study of the vicissitudes of life, we can cultivate this sublime virtue of appreciating others' happiness, welfare and progress. When we learn to rejoice with the joy of others, our hearts get purified, serene and lofty.

Seeing a starving man we offer him food out of compassion (*karunā*). When we see that he has eaten, that his hunger has ceased, and that he feels happy, then we too feel happy and pleased. Such selfless action really brings us unalloyed joy, sympathetic joy (*muditā*). You will now see how these sublime states function together supporting one another.

#### IV

#### Equanimity (*Upekkhā*)

The fourth and the last sublime state is equanimity, *upekkhā*. It is "even-mindedness," mental equipoise and not hedonic indifference. Equanimity is the result of a calm concentrative mind. The four sublime states are interrelated and interdependent, but it is equanimity that guards the rest: love, compassion and sympathetic joy. Equanimity is the most essential quality, deep and difficult to cultivate.

Life is not a bed of roses. One needs much patience, energy and determination to cultivate these qualities without being selfish or

partial. Equanimity or balance of mind guides the other three qualities and keeps the meditator in a place of security. It brings about self-reliance.

We are all confronted with the eight vicissitudes of life (*aṭṭha loka dhamma*): gain and loss, good repute and ill repute, praise and censure, pain and pleasure. It is hard to be undisturbed when touched by this welter of experience. But the man who cultivates equanimity is not upset. He does not waver. Amidst blame and praise, success and failure, he is firm as a solid rock. This, of course, is the attitude of the Arahats, the Consummate Ones. Of them it is said: "Truly the good give up longing for everything. They prattle not with thoughts of craving. Touched by pain or happiness, the wise show neither elation nor depression."<sup>59</sup>

People of lesser attainment who understand the nature of human life and its ups and downs, who cultivate equanimity, can also face the vicissitudes of life with a brave heart. They see things in their proper perspective, how things come into being and pass away. Free from anxiety and restlessness, they can see the fragility of the fragile. Quiet minds ... go on, in fortune or misfortune, at their own private pace, like a clock during a thunderstorm.<sup>60</sup>

The proximate cause of equanimity is the understanding that all beings are the result of their actions (*kamma*). The direct enemy of *upekkhā* is attachment and the indirect or the masked enemy is callousness or unintelligent indifference.

Understanding the working of *kamma*, action or moral causation, and how *kamma* comes to fruition (*kamma-vipāka*), is very necessary to cultivate equanimity. In the light of *kamma* one will be able to keep a detached attitude toward all beings, even inanimate things.

*Upekkhā* puts aside both attachment (*anurodha*) and resentment (*virodha*). They are two extremes. The meditator who follows the Middle Path is neither attracted by the pleasant nor repelled by the unpleasant. He keeps a balanced mind without temper, tantrums, depression or anxiety.



As Wordsworth observed: "Strongest minds are often those of whom the noisy world hears least," and 2,500 and more years ago the Buddha said:

"Yes, emptiness is loud, but fullness calm;  
The fool's a half-filled crock; the sage a lake."<sup>61</sup>

*Mettā* embraces all beings; *karuṇā* embraces those who are suffering; *muditā* embraces the prosperous; and *upekkhā* embraces both the good and bad, the loved and the unloved, the pleasant and the unpleasant, the ugly and the beautiful, without making any discrimination.

"... The meditator experiences joy, being joyful, the mind is concentrated. He dwells suffusing one direction with his heart filled with loving-kindness (*mettā*). Likewise the second, the third, and the fourth direction, so above, below and around; he dwells suffusing the whole world everywhere and equally with his heart filled with loving-kindness, abundant, grown great, measureless, without enmity, without ill will. He dwells with a heart full of compassion (*karuṇā*) ... sympathetic joy (*muditā*) ... equanimity (*upekkhā*) ... without enmity, without ill will.

"It is as if there were a lovely lotus pond with clear water, sweet water, cool water, limpid, with beautiful banks; and a man were to come along from the east, west, north or south, overcome and overpowered by the heat, exhausted, parched and thirsty. On coming to that lotus pond he might quench his thirst with water and quench his feverish heat. Even so ... one who has come into this doctrine and discipline (*dhamma-vinaya*) taught by the Buddha, having thus developed loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, attains inner calm—I say it is by inner calm that he is following the practices fitting for recluses (meditators)."<sup>62</sup>

**ADDENDUM III****Right Effort**

The function of right effort is fourfold: to prevent, abandon, develop and maintain.<sup>63</sup>

**1. What is the effort to prevent?**

"Herein a meditator puts forth his will to prevent the arising of evil, of unwholesome thoughts that have not yet arisen. He strives, develops energy and strengthens his mind (to this end).

"Herein a meditator, seeing a form, hearing a sound, smelling an odour, tasting a flavour, feeling some tangible thing or cognizing a mental object, apprehends neither signs nor particulars (that is, he is not moved by their general features or by their details). In as much as coveting and dejection, evil and unwholesome thoughts break in upon one who dwells with senses unrestrained, he applies himself to such control, he guards over the senses, restrains the senses. This is called the effort to prevent."

**2. What is the effort to abandon?**

"Herein a meditator puts forth his will to abandon the evil, unwholesome thoughts that have already arisen. He strives, develops energy and strengthens his mind (to this end).

"Herein a meditator does not admit sense desires that have arisen, but abandons, discards and repels them, makes an end of them and causes them to disappear. So also with regard to thoughts of ill will and of harm that have arisen. This is called the effort to abandon."

**3. What is the effort to develop?**

"Herein a meditator puts forth his will to produce and develop wholesome thoughts that have not yet arisen. He strives, develops energy and strengthens his mind (to this end).

"Herein a meditator develops the factors of enlightenment based on seclusion, on dispassion, on cessation that is deliverance, namely: mindfulness, investigation of the Dhamma, energy, rapturous joy,



calm, concentration and equanimity. This is called the effort to develop."

#### 4. What is the effort to maintain?

"Herein a monk maintains a favourable object of concentration (meditation). This is called the effort to maintain."

These then are the four efforts:

The unwholesome thoughts referred to here are the three root causes of evil namely: thoughts of lust (craving), hatred and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*). All other passions gather round these three root causes, while wholesome thoughts are their opposites.

The sole purpose of this fourfold effort is success in meditation. The four right efforts are the requisites for concentration. As we saw above, right effort is included in the groups of *samādhi* or concentration. As such, right effort functions together and simultaneously with the other two factors of the group, namely right mindfulness and right concentration. Without right effort the hindrances<sup>64</sup> to mental progress cannot be overcome. Right effort removes the evil and unhealthy thoughts that act as a barrier to the calm of absorption, and promotes and maintains the healthy mental factors that aid the development of concentration.

## ADDENDUM IV

Hindrances (*Nīvaraṇa*)

“There are, monks these five hindrances which cause blindness, loss of vision, and non-knowledge, which take away one’s insight, are associated with pain and do not lead to Nibbāna.”<sup>65</sup>

“*Nīvaraṇa*” means those states which hinder and obstruct mental development. They are called hindrances because they completely close in, cut off and obstruct. They close the door to deliverance. What are the five?

1. Sense desire (*kāmacchanda*),
2. Ill will (*vyāpāda*),
3. Sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*),
4. Restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*),
5. Sceptical doubt (*vicikicchā*).

1. *Kāmacchanda* is lust for sense objects. Sensual thoughts definitely retard mental development. They disturb the mind and hinder concentration. Sensuality is due to non-restraint of the senses, which when unguarded gives rise to thoughts of lust so that the mind-flux is defiled. Hence the need for the meditator to be on his guard against this hindrance which closes the door to deliverance.
2. The next is ill will. As in the case of sense-desire, it is unwise and unsystematic attention that brings about ill will. When not checked, ill will propagates itself, saps the mind and clouds the vision. It distorts the entire mind and thus hinders awakening to truth, blocks the path to freedom. Lust and ill will, based on ignorance, not only hamper mental growth, but act as the root cause of strife and dissension between man and man and nation and nation.
3. The third hindrance is sloth and torpor, a morbid state of the mind and mental properties. It is not, as some are inclined to think, sluggishness of the body; for even the Arahats, the Consummate Ones, who are free from this ill, also experience bodily fatigue. This sloth and torpor, like butter too stiff to spread, makes the



mind rigid and inert. It thus lessens the yogi's enthusiasm and earnestness for meditation so that he becomes mentally sick and lazy. Laxity leads to greater slackness until finally there arises a state of callous indifference.

4. The fourth hindrance is restlessness and worry, another disadvantage that makes progress difficult. When the mind becomes restless like flustered bees in a shaken hive, it cannot concentrate. This mental agitation prevents calmness and blocks the upward path. Worry is just as harmful. When a man worries over one thing and another, over things done or left undone, and over misfortunes, he can never have peace of mind. All this bother and worry, this fidgeting and unsteadiness of mind, prevent concentration. Hence these two drawbacks, restlessness and worry, are included in the five hindrances that retard mental progress.
5. The fifth and the last hindrance is sceptical doubt. The Pali word *vi + cīkicchā* means literally "without (*vigata*) medicine (*cīkiccha*)." The commentators explain this hindrance as the inability to decide anything definitely; it includes doubt with regard to the possibility of attaining the *jhāna*, mental absorption. Perplexity is really a dire disease, and unless we shed our doubts, we will continue to suffer from it. As long as we continue to take a sceptical view of things, sitting on the fence, this will be most detrimental to mental development.

The mind that is obsessed by these five hindrances cannot concentrate successfully on any object of a wholesome nature. It is true that a man can concentrate on an object with thoughts of lust or ill will, etc.; but that is wrong concentration (*micchāsamādhi*). As long as impurities or passions (*kilesa*) exist in man, evil and unwholesome thoughts will continue to arise. The meditator who practises *samādhi*, however, is incapable of committing any evil; for the hindrances are under control.

To overcome the hindrances, one has to develop five psychic factors known as factors of *jhāna* (*jhānaṅga*). They are: *vitakka*, *vicāra*, *pīti*, *sukha*, and *ekaggatā*. It is these psychic factors that raise the meditator from lower to higher levels of mental purity. The

consciousness that is associated with them becomes known as *jhāna*. These psychic factors, in order, step by step, subdue the hindrances that block the path of concentration. Each is the exact opposite of a specific hindrance.

Sense desire is subdued by *ekaggatā*, one-pointedness or unification of the mind; ill will, by joy (*pīti*); sloth and torpor, by applied thought (*vitakka*); restlessness and worry, by happiness (*sukha*); and doubt, by sustained thought (*vicāra*). When placed side by side, they stand thus:

<i>kāmacchanda</i>	—	<i>ekaggatā</i>
<i>vyāpāda</i>	—	<i>pīti</i>
<i>thīna-middha</i>	—	<i>vitakka</i>
<i>uddhacca-kukkucca</i>	—	<i>sukha</i>
<i>vicikicchā</i>	—	<i>vicāra</i>



## ADDENDUM V

## Sona, the Earnest Meditator

There is the story of a monk, the Venerable Sona-kolivisa,<sup>66</sup> who was making a violent but unsuccessful effort to exert himself physically and mentally. Then the following thought occurred to him while in solitude: "The disciples of the Blessed One live with zealous effort and I am one of them. Yet my mind is not free of taints. My family has wealth; I can enjoy my riches and do good; what if I were to give up the training and revert to the low life, enjoy the riches and do good?"

The Blessed One reading his thoughts approached him and asked: "Sona, did you not think: 'The disciples of the Blessed One live with zealous effort (as before) ... and do good?'" "Yes, Venerable Sir."

"And what do you think, Sona, were you not skilful at the lute before when you were a layman?" "Yes Venerable Sir."

"And, what do you think, Sona, when the strings of your lute were overstrung, was it then in tune and playable?" "No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

"And what do you think, Sona, when the strings of your lute were too slack, was it then in tune and playable?" "No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

But when, Sona, the strings of your lute were neither overstrung nor too slack but keyed to the middle pitch was it then in tune and playable?" "Surely, Venerable Sir."

"Even so, Sona, effort when too strenuous leads to flurry and when too slack to indolence. Therefore, Sona, make a firm determination thus: Understanding the equality of the faculties,<sup>67</sup> I shall grasp at the aim by uniformity of effort." "Yes, Venerable Sir."

The Venerable Sona followed the instructions of the Blessed One and in due course attained perfection and was numbered among the Arahats.<sup>68</sup>

## ADDENDUM VI

**The Removal of Distracting Thought**

The twentieth discourse of the Majjhima Nikāya (Vitakka-sañthāna Sutta) gives practical instructions on how to keep away distracting thoughts, and is indispensable to a meditator. The gist of it is as follows.<sup>69</sup> The Buddha addressing his disciples said:

“Monks, the meditator who is intent on higher thought should reflect on five things from time to time. What five?

1. If through reflection on an object, evil, unwholesome thoughts associated with desire, hate and delusion arise in a meditator, he should (in order to get rid of them) reflect of another object which is wholesome. Then the evil, unwholesome thoughts are removed; they disappear. By their removal the mind stands firm and becomes calm, unified and concentrated within (his subject of meditation).

“As a skilled carpenter or his apprentice knocks out and removes a coarse peg with a fine one, so should the meditator get rid of that evil object by reflecting on another object which is wholesome. Then the evil unwholesome thoughts associated with desire, hate and delusion are removed, they disappear. By their removal the mind stands firm ... within.

2. “If the evil thoughts still arise in a meditator who reflects on another object which is wholesome, he should consider the disadvantages of evil thoughts thus: ‘Indeed, these thoughts of mine are unwholesome, blameworthy, and bring painful consequences.’ Then his evil thoughts are removed, they disappear. By their removal the mind stands firm ... within.
3. “If the evil thoughts still arise in a meditator who thinks over their disadvantages, he should pay no attention to, and not reflect on those evil thoughts. Then the evil thoughts are removed, they disappear. By their removal the mind stands firm ... within.
4. “If the evil thoughts still arise in a meditator who pays no attention to and does not reflect on evil thoughts, he should reflect on removing the root of those thoughts. Then the evil



unwholesome thoughts are removed, they disappear. By their removal the mind stands firm ... within.

5. "If the evil thoughts still arise in a meditator who reflects on the removal of their root, he should with clenched teeth, and tongue pressed against his palate restrain, overcome and control the (evil) mind with the (good) mind. Then the evil thoughts are removed, they disappear. By their removal the mind stands firm ... within.

"If through a meditator's reflection on a wholesome object, thinking over disadvantages of evil thoughts, paying no attention to and not reflecting on evil thoughts, reflecting on the removal of their root, restraining, overcoming, and controlling the (evil) mind with the (good) mind with clenched teeth and tongue pressed against his palate, evil thoughts are removed, and the mind stands firm and calm, becomes unified and concentrated within (its subject of meditation) that meditator is called a master of the paths along which thoughts travel. He thinks the thought that he wants to think; he thinks not the thought that he does not want to think. He has cut off craving and removed the fetter fully; mastering pride he has made an end of suffering."

### Notes:

1. M. 26/I. 21.
2. S. iii, 100.
3. Alexandra David-Neel, *With Mystics and Magicians* (London: Penguin, 1940), gives interesting accounts of Tibetan mystics.
4. Dhp. v, 103.
5. Buddhism denies a permanent soul, self, indestructible ego, or any permanent entity, because there is nothing, animate or inanimate, that is permanent, stable, fixed or lasting. All things change, not remaining the same for two consecutive moments. In Buddhism, the word "self" is used as a reflexive pronoun, like oneself, myself, yourself, himself, etc.
6. *International Scala*, Nov. 1971.
7. *Time*, Vol. 100, No. 17, October 1972.
8. Edward Arambawela, "Meditation Cures Pressure," *Sunday Observer* (Ceylon), May 30, 1982.

9. Dhp. v, 243.
10. Dhp. v, 239.
11. See Addendum III.
12. M. 44/I. 301.
13. Meditative absorption is a term difficult to translate. For a description of the *jhānas* see the author's *The Buddha's Ancient Path* (Fifth impression 1987, BPS).
14. A. i, 61.
15. See below under the sub-title "Advice to a Meditator."
16. S. v, 326.
17. See M. 8.
18. A.iv, 200; Ud.54.
19. M. 10; D. 22.
20. S. v, 321.
21. Dhp. v, 13.
22. M. 32/I. 214.
23. *Sabba-kāya*. Literally, "The whole (breath) body." According to the *Visuddhimagga*, "kāya" here does not mean the physical body, but the whole mass of in-breathing and out-breathing.
24. *Tepi viditvā nirujjhanti no aviditā' ti*, Cy. to the discourse.
25. *Dialogues of the Buddha, Part III*, p.35.
26. For details see Addendum IV.
27. See Addendum III.
28. Vin.I.10; S.v,420.
29. See Addendum V for an interesting story of a meditator.
30. See *Jāgara Sutta*, *Devatā Samyutta*, 1.6.
31. Dhp. v, 226.
32. S. v, 115.
33. *Satipaṭṭhāna Commentary*.
34. A. i, 3.
35. See Addendum VI.
36. S. v, 170.
37. From *The Centuries Poetry*, Vol. 2, pp. 153-155.
38. S. i, 4.



39. See Addendum IV.
40. There are ten fetters: 1. sense desire, 2. ill will, 3. pride, 4. speculative opinion or wrong view, 5. doubts, 6. lust for existence, 7. indulgence in wrong rites, rituals and ceremonies, 8. envy, 9. avarice, 10. ignorance. These fetters arise depending on both eye and forms, ear and sounds, etc. The Commentary explains how these fetters arise. Read Soma Thera, *The Way of Mindfulness* (Kandy: BPS), p. 132.
41. 1. Mindfulness, 2. investigation of dhamma (mind-and-matter), 3. energy, 4. rapture, 5. calm, 6. concentration, 7. equanimity. See "The Seven Factors of Enlightenment" in this volume.
42. *Sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesayati*, M. i. 251.
43. S. i, 39.
44. M. 22.
45. See Addendum IV.
46. S. ii, 13.
47. A. i, 100.
48. A. i, 61.
49. Dh.p. v, 372.
50. See Addendum III.
51. M. 118/III. 85.
52. S. iii, 51.
53. S. iii, 44.
54. S. iii, 23.
55. M. 106/II. 263.
56. A. ii, 52, Catukka Nipāta 49; *Anguttara Nikāya, Part I*, trans. by Nyanaponika (Kandy: BPS) Wheel 155/158, p. 86.
57. There are seven latent tendencies: 1. sense desire, 2. ill will, 3. wrong views, 4. doubt, 5. pride, 6. lust for continued existence, 7. ignorance (*kāma-rāga, paṭigha, diṭṭhi, vicikicchā, māna, bhava-rāga, avijjā*) D.iii, 254; A. vii, 11.12.
58. For details see Nyanaponika, *The Four Sublime States* (Kandy: BPS), Wheel 6.
59. Dh.p. v, 83.
60. R. L. Stevenson.
61. Sn. v, 721.
62. M. 40/I. 284.
63. *Samvara, pahāna, bhāvanā, anurakkhana*.

64. See Addendum IV.
65. S. v, 97.
66. Vin. II.I ff.; A. iii. 374-5,
67. The faculties are: faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom (*saddhā*, *virīya*, *sati*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*). M.70,77 and *passim*. On these faculties see S. v, 377.
68. This episode occurs in the Commentary to the Theragāthā: "He received a subject of study from the Master, but was unable to concentrate, owing to his meeting people while he stayed in Cool Wood. And he thought: 'My body is too delicately reared to arrive happily at happiness. A recluse's duties involve bodily fatigues.' So he disregarded the painful sores on his feet gotten from pacing up and down, and strove his utmost but was unable to win. And he thought: 'I am not able to create either path or fruit. Of what use is this religious life to me? I will go back to lower things and work merit. Then the Master discerned, and saved him by the lesson on the Parable of the Lute, showing him how to temper energy with calm. Thus corrected, he went to Vulture's Peak, and in due course won Arahatsip." *Psalm of the Brethren* by Mrs. Rhys Davids (P.T.S.), p. 275.
69. For brevity's sake all the similes but one are omitted. For a detailed account read *The Removal of Distracting Thoughts* trans. by Soma Thera, (Kandy: BPS), Wheel 21.



## The Seven Factors of Enlightenment

(*Satta Bojjhanga*)

The Tipiṭaka, the Buddhist Pali Canon, is replete with references to the factors of enlightenment expounded by the Enlightened One on different occasions under different circumstances. In the *Book of the Kindred Sayings*, V (Saṃyutta Nikāya, Maha Vagga) we find a special section under the title Bojjhanga Saṃyutta wherein the Buddha discourses on the *bojjhangas* in diverse ways. In this section we read a series of three discourses or sermons which have been recited by Buddhists ever since the time of the Buddha as a protection (*paritta* or *pirit*) against pain, disease and adversity, etc.

The term "*bojjhanga*" is composed of *bodhi* + *anga*. "*Bodhi*" denotes enlightenment, to be exact, insight concerned with the realization of the Four Noble Truths; namely: the Noble Truth of Suffering; the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering; the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, and the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. "*Anga*" means factors or limbs. *Bodhi* + *anga* (*bojjhanga*), therefore, means the factors of enlightenment, or the factors for insight, wisdom.

"*Bojjhanga! Bojjhanga!* is the saying, Lord. Pray, Lord, how far is this name applicable?" queried a monk of the Buddha. "*Bodhāya saṃvattantīti kho bhikkhu tasmā Bhojjhangā ti vuccati.*" "They conduce to enlightenment, monk, that is why they are so called," was the succinct reply of the Master.<sup>1</sup>

Further says the Buddha, "Just as, monks, in a peaked house all rafters, whatsoever go together to the peak, slope to the peak, join in the peak, and of them all the peak is reckoned chief, even so monks, the monk who cultivates and makes much of the seven factors of enlightenment, slopes to Nibbāna, inclines to Nibbāna, tends to Nibbāna."<sup>2</sup>

The seven factors are:

1. Mindfulness (*sati*),
2. Keen investigation of the Dhamma (*dhammavicaya*),<sup>3</sup>
3. Energy (*virīya*),
4. Rapture or happiness (*pīti*),
5. Calm (*passaddhi*),
6. Concentration (*saṁādhi*) and
7. Equanimity (*upekkhā*).

For the benefit of the reader one of the discourses on the *bojjhangas* may be mentioned here. It begins: "Thus I heard. At one time the Buddha was living at Rājagaha, at Veluvana, the Bamboo Grove, in the Squirrels' Feeding-ground. At that time the Venerable Mahā Kassapa, who was living in Pippali Cave, was sick, stricken with a severe illness.

Then the Buddha, rising from his solitude at eventide, visited the Ven. Mahā Kassapa, took his seat, and spoke to the Ven. Mahā Kassapa in this way: "Well, Kassapa, how is it with you? Are you bearing up; are you enduring? Do your pains lessen or increase? Are there signs of your pains lessening and not increasing?"

"No, Lord, I am not bearing up. I am not enduring. The pain is very great. There is a sign not of the pains lessening, but of their increasing." "Kassapa, these seven factors of enlightenment are well expounded by me, cultivated and much developed by me, and when cultivated and much developed they conduce to full realization, perfect wisdom, to Nibbāna. What are the seven?

"Mindfulness. This O, Kassapa, is well expounded by me, cultivated and much developed by me, and when cultivated and much developed, it conduces to full realization, perfect wisdom, to Nibbāna. Investigation of the Dhamma ... Energy ... Rapture ... Calm ... Concentration ... Equanimity."

"These seven factors of enlightenment, verily, Kassapa, are well expounded by me, cultivated and much developed by me, and when cultivated and much developed, they conduce to full realization, perfect wisdom, to Nibbāna."



“Verily, O Blessed One, they are factors of enlightenment! Verily, O Welcome One, they are factors of enlightenment!” uttered Mahā Kassapa. Thus spoke the Buddha, and the Venerable Mahā Kassapa rejoicing, welcomed the utterances of the Worthy One. And the Venerable Mahā Kassapa rose from that illness. There and then that ailment of the Venerable Mahā Kassapa vanished.<sup>4</sup>

Another discourse (Mahā Cunda Bojjhanga Sutta) of the three mentioned above reveals that once the Buddha himself was ill, and the Venerable Mahā Cunda recited the *bojjhangas*, factors of enlightenment, and that the Buddha’s grievous illness vanished.<sup>5</sup>

Our mind tremendously and profoundly influences and affects the body. If allowed to function viciously and entertain unwholesome and harmful thoughts, mind can cause disaster, and even kill a being; but mind also can cure a sick body. When concentrated on thoughts with right understanding, the effects mind can produce are immense.

“Mind not only makes sick, it also cures. An optimistic patient has more chance of getting well than a patient who is worried and unhappy. The recorded instances of faith healing include cases in which even organic diseases were cured almost instantaneously.”<sup>6</sup>

Buddhism (*Buddhadhamma*) is the teaching of enlightenment. One who is keen on attaining enlightenment should first know clearly the impediments that block the path to enlightenment.

Life, according to the right understanding of a Buddha is suffering and that suffering is based on ignorance or *avijjā*. Ignorance is the experiencing of that which is unworthy of experiencing, namely evil. Further it is the non-perception of the conglomerate nature of the aggregates (*khandānaṃ rāsaṭṭhami*); non-perception of sense-organ and sense object in their respective and objective natures (*āyatanānaṃ āyatanatṭhami*); non-perception of the emptiness or the relativity of the elements (*dhātūnaṃ suññatṭhami*); non-perception of the dominant nature of the sense-controlling faculties (*indriyānaṃ adhipatiṭṭhami*); non-perception of the thusness—the infallibility of the Four Noble Truths (*saccānaṃ tathatṭhami*). And the five hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇāni*) are the nutriment of (or condition for) this ignorance. They are called hindrances because they completely close in, cut off and obstruct. They hinder the understanding of the way to release from

suffering. These five hindrances are: sensuality (*kāmacchandā*); ill will (*vyāpāda*); obduracy of mind and mental factors (*thīna-middha*); restlessness and flurry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*).

And what is the nutriment of these hindrances? The three evil modes of life (*tīni duccharitāni*): bodily, vocal, and mental wrongdoing. This threefold nutriment is in turn nourished by non-restraint of the senses (*indriya asaṃvaro*) which is explained by the commentator as the admittance of lust and hate into the six sense organs of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind (*cakkādināṃ channam indriyānaṃ rāgapaṭighappavesanāṃ*).

The nutriment of non-restraint is shown to be lack of mindfulness and of clear comprehension (*asati asampajañña*). In the context of nutriment, the drifting away of the object (*dhamma*)—the lapsing of the knowledge of the *lakkaṇas* or characteristics of the existence of impermanence, suffering and voidness of self (*anicca, dukkha* and *anattā*) from the mind, and forgetfulness of the true nature of things are the reasons for non-restraint. It is when one does not bear in mind the transiency and the other characteristics of things that one allows oneself all sorts of vocal and physical liberties and gives rein to full thought imagery of an unskilful kind. Lack of clear comprehension is lack of these four: clear comprehension of purpose (*sāttha sampajañña*); of suitability (*sappāya sampajañña*); of resort (*gocara sampajañña*); and of non-delusion (*asammoha sampajañña*). When one does actions, when one does a thing without a right purpose, when one looks at things or does actions which do not help the growth of the good, when one does things inimical to improvement, when one forgets the Dhamma which is the true resort of one who strives, when one deludedly lays hold of things believing them to be pleasant, beautiful, permanent and substantial, when one behaves thus, then too non-restraint is nourished.

And below this lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension, lies unsystematic attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). Unsystematic attention is attention that is off the right course. That is taking the impermanent as permanent; the painful as pleasure; the soulless as a soul; the bad as good or the repulsive as beautiful. The constant rolling on, wandering that is *saṃsāra* is rooted in unsystematic thinking. When unsystematic thinking increases, it fulfils two things: nescience and



lust for becoming. Ignorance being present, the origination of the entire mass of suffering comes to be. Thus a person who is a shallow thinker, like a ship drifting at the wind's will, like a herd of cattle swept into the whirlpools of a river, like an ox yoked to a wheel-contraption, goes on revolving in the cycle of existence, *saṃsāra*.

And it is said that imperfect confidence (*assaddhiyaṃ*) in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha is the condition which develops unsystematic thinking, and imperfect confidence is due to non-hearing of the true law, the Dhamma (*asaddhammasavanāṃ*). Finally, one does not hear the Dhamma through lack of contact with the wise, through not consorting with the good (*asappurisasamīsevo*). Thus want of *kalyāṇa mittatā*, good friendship, appears to be the basic reason for the ills of the world. And conversely the basis and nutriment of all good is shown to be good friendship. That furnishes one with the food of the sublime Dhamma which in turn produces confidence in the Triple Gem (*Tiniratanāni*), the Tri Ratana,—the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. When one has confidence in the Triple Gem, there come into existence profound or systematic thinking, mindfulness and clear comprehension, restraint of the senses, the three good modes of life, the four arousings of mindfulness, the seven factors of enlightenment, and deliverance through wisdom, one after another in due order.<sup>7</sup>

## I

Let us now deal with the enlightenment factors one by one. Thus first is mindfulness, (*sati*). It is the instrument most efficacious in self-mastery and whoever practises it has found the path to deliverance. It is fourfold: mindfulness consisting in contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*); feeling (*vedanānupassanā*); mind (*cittānupassanā*); and mental objects (*dhammānupassanā*).<sup>8</sup>

The man lacking in this all-important quality of mindfulness cannot achieve anything worthwhile. The Buddha's final admonition to his disciples while lying on his death bed is this: "Transient are all component things. Work out your deliverance with mindfulness" (*vayadhammā sankhārā appamādena sampādetha*).<sup>9</sup> "Strive on with mindfulness. This is my advice to you." (*Sampādetha appamādena esā me anusāsanā*) are the last words of the Venerable Sāriputta

Arahat, the foremost disciple of the Buddha who predeceased the Master. In both these injunctions the most significant and pregnant word is "*appamāda*" which literally means heedfulness, awareness, careful attention. Man cannot be heedful unless he is fully aware of his actions, whether they are mental, verbal or physical at every moment of his waking life. Only when a man is fully awake to and mindful of his activities can he distinguish good from bad and right from wrong. It is in the light of mindfulness that he will see the beauty or the ugliness of his deeds.

The word "*appamāda*" throughout the Tipiṭaka is used to denote *sati*, mindfulness. "*Pamāda*" is defined as absence of mindfulness (*sati vossagga*). Says the Buddha in the Anguttara Nikāya: "Monks, I know not of any other single thing of such power to cause the arising of good thoughts if not yet arisen, or to cause the waning of evil thoughts if already arisen, as heedfulness. In him who is heedful, good thoughts not yet arisen, do arise, and evil thoughts, if arisen, do wane."

Constant mindfulness and vigilance are necessary to avoid ill and perform good. The man with presence of mind who surrounds himself with watchfulness of mind (*satimā*), the man of courage, advances as a racehorse outstrips a decrepit hack. The importance of *sati*, mindfulness, in all our dealings is clearly indicated by the following striking words of the Buddha: "Mindfulness, O disciples, I declare is essential in all things everywhere. It is as salt is to the curry" "*Satimī ca kho ahaṃ bhikkhave sabbatthikaṃ vadāmi. Sabba-byanjanepi loṇadūpanaṃ viya icchitabbā.*" <sup>10</sup>

The Buddha's life is one integral picture of mindfulness. He is the *Sadā sato*, the ever mindful, the ever vigilant. He is the very embodiment of mindfulness. There was never an occasion when the Buddha manifested signs of sluggish inactivity or thoughtlessness. Let us follow in the footsteps of the Buddha and be mindful. Let us give up obduracy of mind and mental factors and see that sloth and torpor do not keep us from engaging in wholesome activities; for that is the sure path to the deathless, happiness and deliverance.

Right mindfulness, in a way, is superior to knowledge, because in the absence of mindfulness it is just impossible for a man to make the best of his learning. Intelligence void of mindfulness tends to lead



man astray and entice him from the path of rectitude and duty. Even people who are well informed and intelligent fail to see a thing in its proper perspective when they lack this all important quality of mindfulness. Men of good standing, owing to deeds done and words spoken thoughtlessly and without due consideration to their consequences, are often subjected to severe and justifiable criticism. Mindfulness is the chief characteristic of all wholesome actions tending to one's own and other's profit.

"*Appamādo mahato athāya saṁvattati*,"<sup>11</sup> "mindfulness is conducive to great profit," that is, the highest mental development, and it is through such attainment that deliverance from the sufferings of *saṁsāra* is possible." "The man who delights in mindfulness and regards heedlessness with dread, is not liable to fall away. He is in the vicinity of Nibbāna."<sup>12</sup>

## II

The second enlightenment factor is keen investigation of the Dhamma, (*dharmavicaya*). It is the sharp analytical knowledge of understanding the true nature of all constituent things, animate or inanimate, human or divine. It is seeing things as they really are, seeing things in their proper perspective. It is the analysis of all component things into their fundamental elements, right down to their ultimates. Through keen investigation one understands that all compounded things pass through the inconceivably rapid moments of *uppāda*, *ṭhiti* and *bhaṅga*, or of arising, reaching a peak and ceasing, just as a river in flood sweeps to climax and fades away. The whole universe is constantly changing, not remaining the same for two consecutive moments. All things in fact are subjected to conditions, causes and effects (*paccaya*, *hetu* and *phala*). Systematic thinking (*yoniso manasikāra*) comes naturally through right mindfulness and it urges one to discriminate, to reason and to investigate. Shallow thinking, unsystematic thought (*ayoniso manasikāra*) makes men muddle-headed and then they fail to investigate the nature of things. Such people cannot see action and reaction, cause and effect, seed and fruit, the rise and fall of compounded things. Says the Buddha: *paññavantassāyaṇi dhammo nāyaṇi dhammo duppaññassa*. "This doctrine is for the wise and not for the unwise."<sup>13</sup>

Buddhism does not demand of the follower blind faith. At the very outset the sceptic will be pleased to hear of its call for investigation. Buddhism, from beginning to end, is open to all those who have eyes to see and minds to understand. The Buddha tutored his disciples in the ways of discrimination and intelligent inquiry. To the inquiring Kālāmas the Buddha answered: "Right it is to doubt, right it is to question what is doubtful and what is not clear. In a doubtful matter wavering does arise." (see above p.91).

One who goes in quest of truth is not satisfied with surface knowledge. He wants to delve deep and see what is beneath. That is the sort of search encouraged in Buddhism. That type of search yields right understanding.

He that cultivates *dhammavicaya*, investigation of the Dhamma, focuses his mind on the five aggregates, the *pañcakkhandha*, and endeavours to realize the rise and fall or the arising and passing away (*udayabbaya*) of this conglomeration of bare forces (*suddha sankhāra puñja*)—this conflux of mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*). It is only when he fully realizes the evanescent nature of his own mind and body that he experiences happiness, joyous anticipation. Therefore, it is said:

*Yato yato sammasati-khandhānam udayabbayam  
Labhati pīti pāmojjam-amataṁ taṁ vijānataṁ.*<sup>16</sup>

Whenever he reflects on the rise and fall of the aggregates, he experiences unalloyed joy and happiness. To the discerning one that (reflection) is deathless, Nibbāna.

What is impermanent and not lasting he sees as sorrow-fraught. What is impermanent and sorrow-fraught, he understands as void of a permanent and everlasting soul or self. It is this grasping, this realization of the three characteristics, or laws of transiency, sorrow and non-self (soullessness), *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā* that is known to Buddhists as *vipassanāñāṇa* or penetrative insight, which, like the razor-edged sword, entirely eradicates all the latent tendencies (*anusaya*), and then all the varied ramifications of sorrow's cause are finally destroyed. A man who ascends to this summit of vision is an Arahāt, a Consummate One, whose clarity of vision, whose depth of insight, penetrates into the deepest recesses of life and cognizes the true nature that underlies all appearance. He indeed is the true



philosopher, the true scientist who has grasped the meaning of life in the fullest sense. No more can he be swept off his feet by the glamour of things ephemeral. No more can he be confused by the fearful and terrible appearances. No more is it possible for him to have a clouded view of phenomena; for he has transcended all capacity for error through the perfect immunity which penetrative insight, *vipassanā-nāṇa*, alone can give.

### III

The third enlightenment factor is energy (*virīya*). It is a mental property (*cetasika*) and the sixth limb of the Noble Eightfold Path, there called right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*).

Buddhism is for the sincerely zealous, strong and firm in purpose, and not for the indolent (*āraddhaviriyassāyaṃ dhammo nāyaṃ dhammo kusīta*).<sup>17</sup> The Buddha has not proclaimed himself a saviour willing and able to take upon himself the evil of mankind. On the contrary, he declares that each person has to bear the burden of his own ill deeds. In the words of the Buddha, each individual has himself to put forth the necessary effort and work out his own deliverance with heedfulness. The Buddha is only a Path-Revealer. Others may lend us a helping hand indirectly, but deliverance from suffering must be wrought out and fashioned by each one for himself upon the anvil of his own actions. "Be islands unto yourselves, be your own refuge."<sup>18</sup> Thus did the Master exhort his followers to acquire self-reliance. A follower of the Buddha should not under any circumstances relinquish hope and effort; for the Buddha was one who never gave up courage and effort even as a Bodhisatta. As an aspirant for Buddhahood, he had as his motto the following inspiring words: *mā nivattha, abhikkhama*, "Falter not, advance." The man who is mindful (*satimā*) and cultivates keen investigation should next put forth the necessary effort to fight his way out.

The function of energy is four-fold:

1. The effort to discard evils that have arisen in the mind;
2. the effort to prevent the arising of unarisen evil;
3. the effort to develop unarisen good;
4. the effort to maintain and promote the further growth of good already arisen. (*Samvara, pahāna, bhāvana, anurakkhana*.)<sup>19</sup>

Says the Vitakka Saṅhāna Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya: "Just as a competent carpenter or a carpenter's apprentice with a slender pin will knock out, remove and dispose of a thicker one, so also, when through dwelling on some idea that has come to him, evil, unsalutary considerations connected with desire, hate and delusion arise in the monk, then he should engender in his mind an idea other than that former idea and connected with salutary things whereupon the evil unsalutary considerations will disappear and go to decay, and with their disappearing his mind will become settled, subdued, unified, concentrated."<sup>20</sup>

Thus the path of purification is impossible for an indolent person. The aspirant for enlightenment (*bodhi*) should possess unflinching energy coupled with fixed determination. Enlightenment and deliverance lie absolutely and entirely in his own hands. "Man must himself by his own resolute efforts rise and make his way to the portals that give upon liberty, and it is always, at every moment, in his power so to do. Neither are those portals locked and the key in possession of someone else from whom it must be obtained by prayer and entreaty. That door is free of all bolts and bars save those the man himself has made."

By precept and example, the Buddha was an exponent of the strenuous life. Hear these words of the Buddha: "The idler who does not strive, who, though young and strong, is full of sloth, who is weak in resolution and thought, that lazy and idle man will not find the way to wisdom, the way to enlightenment."<sup>21</sup>

Following in the footsteps of the Buddha the disciple thinks: "Though only my skin, sinews and bones remain, and my blood and flesh dry up and wither away, yet never will I give up my quest and swerve from the path of rectitude and enlightenment." (see p.82)

#### IV

The fourth enlightenment factor is rapture or happiness (*pīti*). This too is a mental property (*cetasika*) and is a quality which suffuses both the body and mind. The man lacking in this quality cannot proceed along the path to enlightenment. There will arise in him sullen indifference to the Dhamma, an aversion to the practice of meditation,



and morbid manifestations. It is, therefore, very necessary that a man striving to attain enlightenment and final deliverance from the fetters of *saṃsāra*, that repeated wandering, should endeavour to cultivate the all important factor of happiness. No one can bestow on another the gift of happiness; each one has to build it up by effort, reflection and concentrated activity. As happiness is a thing of the mind it should be sought not in external and material things though they may in a small way be instrumental.

Contentment is a characteristic of the really happy individual. The ordinary worldling seems to think that it is difficult to cultivate and develop contentment; but by dint of courage, determination, systematic attention and thought about the things that one meets with in everyday life, by controlling one's evil inclinations, and by curbing the impulses—the sudden tendencies to act without reflection—one can keep the mind from being soiled and experience happiness through contentment.

In man's mind arise conflicts of diverse kinds and if these conflicts are to be controlled, while still not eliminated, man must give less rein to inclinations and longings, in other words he must cultivate contentment. Hard it is to give up what lures and holds us in thrall; and hard it is to exorcise the evil spirits that haunt the human heart in the shape of ugly and unwholesome thoughts. These evils are the manifestations of lust, hate and delusion—*lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*. Until one attains to the very crest of purity and peace by constant training of the mind, one cannot defeat these hosts completely. The mere abandoning of outward things, fasting, bathing in rivers and at hot springs, and so forth, do not tend to purify a man; these things do not make a man happy, holy and harmless. Hence the need to develop the Buddha's path of purification: morality, meditation and insight—*sīla*, *saṃādhi*, and *paññā*.

When discussing happiness in the context of *sambojjhaṅgas*, we must bear in mind the vast difference between pleasure and happiness. Pleasure—pleasant feeling—is something very momentary and fleeting. Is it wrong to say that pleasant feelings are the prelude to pain? What people hug in great glee this moment, turns to be a source of pain the next moment. "The desired is no more there when the outstretched

hand would grasp it, or, being there and grasped, it vanishes like a flake of snow."

In the words of Robert Burns, from Tam O'Shanter:

"Pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;  
Or, like the snowfall in the river,  
A moment white, then melts for ever."

Seeing a form, hearing a sound, perceiving an odour, tasting a flavour, feeling some tangible thing, cognizing an idea, people are moved, and from those sense objects and mental objects they experience a certain degree of pleasure, but it is all a passing show of phenomena. Unlike the animal whose sole purpose is to derive a feeling of pleasure from any source, at any cost, man should endeavour to gain real *pīti* or happiness. Real happiness or rapture comes not through grasping or clinging to things animate or inanimate but by giving up (*nekkhamma*). It is the detached attitude toward the world that brings about true happiness. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Discourse on Foundation of the Mindfulness, speaks of pleasant worldly feeling (*sāmisā sukha*) and pleasant unworldly feeling (*nirāmisā sukha*). *Nirāmisā sukha* is far superior to *sāmisā sukha*.

Once the Buddha did not receive even a single morsel of food when he went on his almsround, and an intruder remarked that the Master was apparently afflicted with hunger. Thereupon the Supreme Buddha breathed forth the following verse:<sup>22</sup>

"Ah, happily do we dwell  
we who have no impediments,  
Feeders on joy shall we be  
even as the radiant devās."<sup>23</sup>

Unalloyed joy comes to a man who ponders thus: "Others may harm, but I will become harmless; others may slay living beings, but I will become a non-slayer; others may live unchaste, but I will live pure; others may utter falshood, I, however, will speak the truth; others may slander, talk harshly, indulge in gossip, but I will talk only words that promote concord, harmless words agreeable to the ear, full of love, heart-pleasing, courteous, worthy of being borne in mind,



timely, fit and to the point. Others may be covetous, I will not covet. Energetic, steeped in modesty of heart, unswerving as regards truth and rectitude, peaceful, honest, contented, generous and truthful in all things will I be." Thus conducive to full realization, perfect wisdom, to Nibbana is this fourth enlightenment factor *pīti*, happiness.

## V

Calm or tranquillity (*passaddhi*) is the fifth factor of enlightenment. *Passaddhi* is two-fold. *Kāya passaddhi* is calm of body. *Kāya* here means all the mental properties rather than the physical body, in other words, calm of the aggregates of feeling (*vedanākkhandha*), perception (*saññākkhandha*) and the volitional activities or conformations (*sankhārakkhandha*). *Citta passaddhi* is the calm of the mind, that is the aggregate of consciousness (*viññāṇakkhandha*).

*Passaddhi* is compared to the happy experience of a weary walker who sits down under a tree in the shade, or the cooling of a hot place by rain. Hard it is to tranquillize the mind. It trembles and it is unsteady, difficult to guard and hold back; it quivers like a fish taken from its watery home and thrown on the dry ground. It wanders at will.<sup>24</sup> Such is the nature of this ultra-subtle mind. It is systematic attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) that helps the aspirant for enlightenment to quieten the fickle mind. Unless a man cultivates tranquillity of mind, concentration cannot be successfully developed. A tranquilized mind keeps away all superficialities and futilities.

Many a man today thinks that freedom and unrestraint are synonyms and that the taming of the self is a hindrance to self-development. In the teaching of the Buddha, however, it is quite different. The self must be subdued and tamed on right lines if it is to become truly well. The Buddha, the Tamed, teaches the Dhamma for the purpose of taming the human heart (*danto so Bhagavā dama-tāya dhammanī deseti*).<sup>25</sup>

It is only when the mind is not allowed to kick over the traces and is kept to the right road of orderly progress that it becomes useful for the individual possessor of it and for society. A disorderly mind is of the nature of a liability both to the owner of it and to others. All the havoc wrought in the world is wrought by men who have not learned

the way of mental calm, balance and poise. Calmness is not weakness. The calm attitude at all times shows a man of culture. It is not too hard a task for a man to be calm when all things round him are favourable. But to be composed in mind in the midst of unfavourable circumstances is hard indeed, and it is this difficult quality that is worth achieving; for by such control one builds up strength of character. The most deceptive thing in the world is to imagine that they alone are strong who are noisy, or that they alone possess power who are fussily busy.

The man who cultivates calm of the mind does not get upset, confused or excited when confronted with the eight vicissitudes of the world (*atthaloka dhamma*). He endeavours to see the rise and fall of all things conditioned, how things come into being and pass away. Free from anxiety and restlessness he will see the fragility of the fragile. A story in our books tells us how when a mother was asked why she did not lament and feel pain over the death of her beloved son, said: "Uninvited he came, uninvited he passed away, as he came so he went, what use is there in lamenting, weeping and wailing?"<sup>26</sup> Such is the advantage of a tranquillized mind. It is unshaken by loss and gain, good-repute and ill-repute, censure and praise, pleasure and pain and undisturbed by adversity. This frame of mind is brought about by viewing the sentient world in its proper perspective. Thus calm or *passaddhi* leads man to enlightenment and deliverance from suffering.

## VI

The sixth enlightenment factor is concentration (*samādhi*). It is only the tranquillized mind that can easily concentrate on a subject of meditation. The calm concentrated mind sees things as they really are (*samāhito yathā bhūtaṃ pajānāti*). The unified mind brings the five hindrances, *pañca nīvaraṇāni*, under subjugation.

Concentration is the intensified steadiness of the mind comparable to an unflickering flame of a lamp in a windless place. It is concentration that fixes the mind aright and causes it to be unmoved and undisturbed. Correct practice of *samādhi* maintains the mind and the mental properties in a state of balance like a steady hand holding a pair of scales. Right concentration dispels passions that disturb the mind, and brings



purity and placidity of mind. The concentrated mind is not distracted by sense objects; concentration of the highest type cannot be disturbed even by thunder.

One who is intent on *samādhi* should develop a love of virtue, *sīla*, for it is virtue that nourishes mental life, and makes it coherent and calm, equable and full of rich content. The unrestrained mind dissipates itself in frivolous activity.

Many are the impediments that confront a meditator, an aspirant for enlightenment, but there are five particular hindrances that hinder concentrative thought, *samādhi*, and obstruct the way to deliverance. In the teaching of the Buddha they are known as *pañca nīvaraṇa*, the five hindrances. The Pali term *nīvaraṇa* denotes that which hinders or obstructs mental development (*bhāvanā*). They are called hindrances because they completely close in, cut off and obstruct. They close the doors to deliverance. The five hindrances are:

- i. Sensual desires (*kāmacchanda*),
- ii. Ill will (*vyāpāda*),
- iii. Obduracy of mind and mental factors (*thīnamiddha*),
- iv. Restlessness and worry (*uddhaccakukkucca*), and
- v. Doubt (*vicikicchā*).

*Kāmacchanda* or sensual desires or intense thirst for either possessions or the satisfaction of base desires, is the first that binds man to *saṃsāra*, repeated existence, and closes the door to final deliverance.

What is sensuality? Where does this craving (*taṇhā*) arise and take root? According to the discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), "Where there is the delightful and the pleasurable, there this craving arises and takes root." Forms, sounds, smell, taste, bodily contacts, and ideas are delightful and pleasurable; there this craving arises and takes root. Craving when obstructed by some cause is transformed to frustration and wrath.

As the *Dhammapada* (216) says:

*Taṇhāya jāyati soko—taṇhāya jāyati bhayaṃ*  
*Taṇhāya vippamuttassa—natthi soko kuto bhayaṃ*

“From craving arises grief,  
 From craving arises fear;  
 To one who is free from craving  
 There is no grief, whence fear?”

The next hindrance is ill will, hatred or aversion, *vyāpāda*. Man naturally revolts against the unpleasant and the disagreeable, and also is depressed by them. To be separated from the loved is painful, and equally painful is the union with the loathed. Even a disagreeable dish, an unpleasant drink, an unlovely demeanour, and a hundred other trifles, may cause indignation. It is wrong thinking, unsystematic attention, that brings about hatred. Hatred, on the other hand, breeds hatred and clouds the vision; it distorts the entire mind and its properties and thus hinders awakening to truth, the way to freedom. This lust and hatred based on ignorance, the crowning corruption of all our madness (*avijjā paramam malam*), indeed, is the root cause of strife and dissension between man and man and nation and nation.

The third hindrance consists of a pair of evils: *thīna* and *middha*. *Thīna* is lassitude or morbid state of the mind, and *middha* is a morbid state of the mental properties. *Thīna-middha*, as some are inclined to think, is certainly not sluggishness of the body; for even the Arahats, Consummate Ones who are free from this pair of evils also experience bodily fatigue. *Thīna-middha* retards mental development; under its influence the mind is inert, like butter too stiff to spread or like molasses sticking to a spoon.

Laxity is a dangerous enemy of mental development. Laxity leads to greater laxity until finally there arises a state of callous indifference. This flabbiness of character is a fatal block to righteousness and freedom. It is through *virīya* or mental effort that one overcomes this pair of evils.

The fourth hindrance also comprises twin drawbacks: *uddhacca* and *kukkucca*, restlessness and brooding, or flurry and worry. As a rule anyone who commits evil is mentally excited and restless; the guilty and the impatient suffer from this hindrance. The minds of men who are restless and unstable are like flustered bees in a shaken hive. This mental agitation impedes meditation and blocks the upward path. Equally baneful is mental worry. Often people repent over the evil



actions they have committed. This is not praised by the Buddha for it is useless to cry over spilt milk. Instead of brooding over such shortcomings, one should endeavour not to repeat such unwholesome deeds. There are others who worry over the good deeds omitted and duties left undone. This too serves no purpose. It is as futile as asking the further bank of a river to come over so that we may get to the other side. Instead of uselessly worrying over what good one has failed to do, one should endeavour to perform wholesome deeds. This mental unsteadiness (*kukkucca*) also hinders mental progress.

The fifth and the last hindrance is doubt, *vicikicchā*. The Pali term *vi + cīkicchā* literally means medicineless. One who suffers from perplexity is really suffering from a dire disease, and until and unless one sheds one's doubts one will continue to suffer from it. So long as man is subject to this mental itching, so long will he continue to take a cynical view of things which is most detrimental to mental development. The commentators explain this hindrance as the inability to decide anything definitely; it also comprises doubt with regard to the possibility of attaining the *jhānas*, concentrative thought. In this connection, one may add that even non-Buddhists who are not concerned with Buddhism can inhibit doubt (*vicikicchā nivarāṇa*) and gain the *jhānas*.

The person who attains the *jhānas* inhibits all five hindrances by the five *jhānangas*, characteristics or factors of *jhāna*: *kamaccanda* is inhibited by *ekaggatā* (one-pointedness or unification of the mind); *vyāpāda* by *pīti* (joy); *thīna-middha* by *vitakka* (applied-thought); *uddhacca-kukkucca* by *sukha* (happiness) and *vicikicchā* by *vicāra* (sustained-thought). The attainment of *jhānas*, however, is not the end aimed at. *Jhānas* should be made to lead to *vipassanā*, intuitional insight. It is through insight that one eradicates the latent defilements (*anusaya kilesa*) and attains perfect purity.

So long as impurities or taints (*kilesa*) exist latent in man's mind, so long will the arising of evil (*pāpa*) in him continue. The practiser of *jhāna* whose purpose is to attain *vipassanā* commits no ill action because the hindrances are inhibited, but he has the impurities latent in his make-up and, therefore, he is not yet in a state of absolute security. But the Arahāt, the Perfect One, wipes out all the latent impurities with their rootlets and brings this repetitive wandering,

*saṃsāra*, to a standstill. He is one whose *saṃsāra* is indubitably ended; for by him the noble life has been perfected and the task done. For him there is no more rebirth.<sup>28</sup>

A sincere student who is bent on deep study cuts himself off from sense attractions, and retiring to a congenial atmosphere, holds fast to his studies, and thus steering through all disturbing factors, attains success in his examinations. In the same way, seated in cloister-cell or some other suitable place, the meditator fixes his mind on a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) and by struggle and unceasing effort inhibits the five hindrances and washing out the impurities of his mind-flux, gradually reaches the first, the second, the third and the fourth *jhāna*. Then by the power of *samādhi*, concentrative thought, thus won, he turns his mind to the understanding of reality in the highest sense. It is at this stage that he cultivates *vipassanā*, intuitional insight. It is through *vipassanā* that one understands the real nature of all component and conditioned things. *Vipassanā* aids one to see things as they truly are. One sees truth face to face and comprehends that all tones are just variations struck on the one chord that runs through all life—the chord which is made up of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*: impermanence, sorrow and egolessness.

The meditator gains insight into the true nature of the world he has clung to for so long. He breaks through the shell of ignorance to the hypercosmic. With that final catharsis he reaches the state where dawns for him the light of Nibbāna, the calm beyond words, the unshakable deliverance of the mind (*akuppā cetovimutti*).<sup>29</sup>

Says the *Dhammapada* (373): "To the bhikkhu who has retired to a secluded spot, whose mind is calmed, and who clearly discerns the Dhamma, there comes unalloyed joy and happiness transcending that of humans."

## VII

The seventh and the last factor of enlightenment is equanimity (*upekkhā*). In the Abhidhamma, *upekkhā* is indicated by the term *tatramajjhataṭā*, neutrality. It is mental equipoise and not hedonic indifference. Equanimity is the result of a calm concentrative mind. It is hard, indeed, to be undisturbed when touched by the vicissitudes of



life, but the man who cultivates this difficult quality of equanimity is not upset.

Amidst the welter of experience (*aṭṭha loka dhamma*), gain and loss, good-repute and ill-repute, praise and censure, pain and pleasure, he never wavers. He is firm as a solid rock. Of course, this is the attitude of the Arahāt, the Consummate One. Of him it is said: "Truly the good give up longing for everything. The good prattle not with thoughts of craving. Touched by happiness or by pain, the wise show neither elation nor depression."<sup>30</sup>

Refraining from intoxicants and becoming heedful, establishing themselves in patience and purity, the wise train their minds and it is through such training that a quiet mind is achieved.

Mention is made in our books of four wrong paths (*cattāro agati*). The path of greed (*chanda*), of hate (*dosa*), of cowardice (*bhaya*), of delusion (*moha*). People commit evil being enticed along one or more of these wrong paths, but the man who has reached perfect neutrality through the cultivation of equanimity, always avoids such wrong paths. His serene neutrality enables him to see all beings impartially.

A certain understanding of the working of kamma (actions), and how kamma comes into fruition (*kamma-vipāka*) is very necessary for one who is genuinely bent on cultivating equanimity. In the light of kamma one will be able to have a detached attitude towards all beings, even to inanimate things. The proximate cause of equanimity is the understanding that all beings are the result of their actions (*kamma*).

Shāntideva writes in *Bodhicaryāvatāra*:

"Some there be that loathe me; then why  
Shall I, in being praised, rejoice?  
Some there be that praise me; then why  
Shall I brood over blaming voice?

Who master is of self, will ever bear  
A smiling face; he puts away all frowns,  
Is first to greet another, and to share  
His all. This friend of all the world, Truth crowns."<sup>31</sup>

This is a glimpse of the seven enlightenment factors, expounded by the Supreme Buddha for the attaining of full realization and perfect wisdom, of Nibbana the Deathless. The cultivation or the neglect of these factors of enlightenment is left to each one of us. With the aid of the teaching of the Buddha each one of us has the power to detect and destroy the cause of suffering. Each one individually can put forth the necessary effort to work out his deliverance. The Buddha has taught us the way to life as it is, and has furnished the directions for such a research by each of us individually. Therefore, we owe it to ourselves to find out for ourselves the truth about life and to make the best of it. We cannot say justifiably that we do not know how to proceed. There is nothing vague in the teaching of the Buddha. All the necessary indications are clear as clear could be. Buddhism from beginning to end is open to all those who have eyes to see, and minds to understand. The only thing necessary on our part for the full realization of the truth is firm determination, endeavour and earnestness to study and apply the teaching, each working it out for himself, to the best of his ability. The Dhamma yet beckons the weary pilgrim to the happy haven of Nibbāna's security and peace. Let us, therefore, cultivate the seven enlightenment factors with zest and unflagging devotion, and advance:

"Remembering the Saints of other days,  
And recollecting how it was they lived,  
Even though today be but the after-time—  
One yet may win the Ambrosial Path of Peace."<sup>32</sup>

### Notes:

1. S. v, 72.
2. *Kindred Sayings*, v. p. 63.
3. "Dhamma" is a multisignificant term. Here it means mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*); *dharmavicaya* is the investigation or analysis of this conflux of mind and body, and all component and conditioned things.
4. S. v, 81.
5. S. v, 81.
6. Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means* (London, 1946), p. 259.
7. *Sammoha Vinodani*.



8. Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, M. 10 or D. 22. See *The Foundations of Mindfulness*, trans. by Nyanasatta (Kandy: BPS) Wheel 19.
9. D. 16 / II. 156.
10. Satipaṭṭhāna Commentary.
11. Sagāthaka Vagga, Saṃyutta Nikāya.
12. Dhp. v, 32.
13. A. iv, 232.
14. M. 38 / I. 245.
15. Jñānasāra - Samuccaya, p. 31.
16. Dhp. v, 374.
17. A. iv, 232.
18. D. 16 / II. 100.
19. A. ii, 14-15.
20. For a detailed study read. *The Removal of Distracting Thoughts*, trans. by Soma Thera (Kandy: BPS). See also above p.254
21. Dhp. v, 280.
22. Dhp. v, 200.
23. Devas are deities.
24. Dhp. vv, 33-36.
25. D. 25 / III. 541.
26. Uruga Jātaka, 354.
27. Dhp.v, 216.
28. M. 27.
29. M. 30 / I. 205.
30. Dhp. v, 83.
31. Translation by Kassapa Thera.
32. *Psalms of the Brethren (Theragāthā)*, v, 947.

## Women in Buddhist Literature

### Introduction

#### The Place of Women in Buddhism

When Siddhattha Gotama the Buddha appeared in India over 2500 years ago, women occupied a very servile and abject place in Indian society. Her place at that time in the rest of the civilized world, which extended from China to Greece, was as craven and degraded. It is universally acknowledged today that the Buddha, as the founder of a religion that has spread far and wide throughout the world, and reached the furthestmost corners of the globe, propounded a philosophy which is one of the most magnificent and monumental in the history of human thought.

But the equally amazing and stupendous role in which the Buddha figured as a social reformer and a cultural revolutionary is sometimes forgotten by the historians of Buddhism.

Predominant among the changes he wrought upon the fabric of human society of his day were the annihilation of the pernicious caste system and the emancipation of women. With rare and remarkable courage he exposed the stupidity and folly inherent in the manacles of caste and the slavery of women. He wrought a renaissance in the habits and thoughts of men in regard to these two vital issues which at that time were sapping the moral fibre and vigour of the Indian people. He transferred a society steeped in blind bigoted prejudice and hide-bound superstition into one full of robust moral strength and ethical purity.

For ages before the advent of the Buddha, Brahmin hegemony which held the whole of India in its iron clasp, had reduced woman to a position of a menial or a chattel. She had no rights of her own, no



freedom to speak of, but was confined to the four walls of her home and was thought unfit for anything higher than that of being a domestic servant to her husband, her father or brother. She was never regarded as the equal of man in society.

According to *Manusmṛti*, *The Laws of Manu*, a code of conduct that guided the destinies of ancient Indian social life laid down by the well known Indian law giver Manu, matrimony was the forging of the bonds of slavery on a woman so that she became fettered to man for life—an appendage to her husband, his servitor and attendant.

Submissive obedience to her husband, the execution of his command, the implementation of his wishes alone sufficed without anything more to qualify a wife to enter the portals of heaven. Unlike a man, she need not perform any sacrifices nor observe any religious rites and ceremonies, nor dedicate herself to a life of prayer and pūjā to trace her way to paradise. Faithful allegiance to her husband, and constant submissiveness to him was the only key that opened the gates of celestial bliss.<sup>1</sup> Under Manu women have no right to study the Vedas. That is why their rites are performed without Veda mantras. This view of woman was an insult to the women of India.

Such wifely fidelity was not confined only to the duration of her husband's lifetime. It had to be pursued even to the funeral pyre of her husband. It was expected of an Indian wife that she should follow her husband to the next world by immolating her body by flinging herself in to the burning flames of her husband's pyre. Although these barbaric practices had once been completely abolished and exterminated and no longer remained to besmear the fair face of Indian culture, yet their widespread prevalence in ancient Indian society and the occasional resurgence today in modern India, is a clear pointer to the debased position that women held in society in the days of long ago, and may still be held to some degree.

Society at that time was so constituted that the birth of a daughter was considered a misfortune—nay something more—a disaster. Not only the common people but even kings were not immune from this narrow and erratic outlook. The story goes that on one occasion when King Kosala was having a conversation with the Buddha as was his normal custom, the news was brought to him that his queen and chief

consort, Mallika, had borne him a daughter. At this the king was distraught, his face fell and his countenance became disconsolate and grief stricken. Noticing this the Enlightened One remarked:

“Do not be perturbed O, King,  
A female child may prove  
Even a better offspring than a male,  
For she may grow up wise and virtuous,  
Her husband’s mother reverencing, and a faithful wife.

The boy that she may bear may do great deeds,  
And rule great realms, yea, such a son  
Of noble wife becomes his country’s guide.”<sup>2</sup>

In Buddhism differences in sex constitute no impediment to the attainment of the highest perfection. Referring to the Noble Eightfold Path the Buddha compares it to a chariot and observes:

“And be it woman, be it man for whom  
Such chariot does wait, by that same car  
Into Nibbāna’s presence shall they come.”<sup>3</sup>

Understanding well the virulently hostile and venomous attitude to women, both in the religious systems and the political society of his day, the Buddha generated a revolution in the thoughts and feelings of his fellow men by openly and courageously declaring that woman was in no way inferior to man and that in treading the assiduous and difficult path of moral perfection and penetrative wisdom that led to Nibbāna, she was on a par with man. Each woman, like each man, had in her the potentiality of becoming an Arahāt, the spark of immortal sainthood.

This declaration of the Buddha, like his denunciation of the caste system, caused a tremendous upheaval in the religious circles of his day for it was a direct and bold confrontation with the entrenched orthodoxy of the time. However, soon the citadels of orthodoxy had to succumb to the triumphant overpowering doctrine of the Buddha.

The Buddha elevated the status of woman by pointing out that a woman is the mother of man and no person is worthy of greater reverence and veneration than one’s mother; and it is well nigh impossible for a child to pay off the debt he or she owes to a mother.



In the Buddhist texts sometimes woman is referred to, out of regard and respect, as a society of mothers (*Mātugāma*). In later times in India, men of understanding, following the injunction of the Buddha and regarding the value of a mother, declared: "The mother and the motherland should be respected more than heaven itself."<sup>4</sup>

The Buddha also inculcated in people the need to pay due deference and respect to the members of the fair sex. He taught men to protect their sisters, to treat their wives with humanity and tenderness, to regard them as equals and friends, and to allow their daughters the same opportunities in life as they give their sons. Further, in the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, the compendium of laymen's ethics, the Buddha laid down the guidelines that should direct the conduct of a husband towards his wife: he should minister to her by courtesy, by not despising her, by faithfulness, by delegating authority to her, and by providing her with ornaments.

In the same sutta he also pointed out the manner in which a wife should conduct herself towards husband. She shows compassion to her husband in five ways: she performs her duties well; she is hospitable to her husband's relations and attendants; she is faithful; she protects what he brings; and she is skilled and industrious in discharging her duties.

Some hasty critics have leaped to the conclusion that the Buddha ignored and failed to pay adequate attention to the duties and ideals of lay womanhood. These critics have only to read the discourses of the Buddha, especially those in the *Anguttara Nikāya*<sup>5</sup> and *Saṃyutta Nikāya*<sup>6</sup> to realise to what extent the Enlightened One has laid emphasis on the welfare of "the society of mothers." According to the Buddha, all progress and achievement, both mundane and supramundane, are within the reach of a woman leading a household life and following domestic vocations, provided she obeys the injunctions of the Buddha.

Virtues that would conduce towards the well-being of women both in this world and in the next have been promulgated by the Buddha as follows:

- i. religious devotion
- ii. a sense of shame and fear

- iii. not disposed towards malice and animosity and anger
- iv. not jealous
- v. not niggardly but largehearted
- vi. pure in conduct
- vii. virtuous and moral
- viii. learned and steeped in knowledge
- ix. ardent and zealous
- x. mentally alert and nimble
- xi. wise and sagacious.<sup>7</sup>

A woman possessed of these attributes was on the sure road to peace and happiness.

As Euripides, the great Greek dramatist, has observed: "There is no worse evil than a bad woman and nothing has ever been produced better than a good one." It was because the Buddha was confident that women had the capacity and competence to scale the highest summits in human progress that he acceded to the importunate entreaties of his foster-mother Pajāpati Gotamī and established the Order of Nuns (the Bhikkhunī Sāsana). In doing so the Buddha, for the first time in the religious history of humanity, accorded to women a place of the utmost importance. This was something unique and unparalleled among the numerous religious systems and schools of religious thought that prevailed before and during the time of the Buddha. It was an astounding innovation that took the contemporary religious and social leaders at the time completely by surprise. It was an amazing innovation for it conceded to women a nobility of nature, a strength and firmness of moral fibre, a capacity for penetrating wisdom, equal to that of man.

And what is to be further remembered is that the Buddha permitted the establishment of this Order of Nuns at a time and place in history when women had been relegated to a very inferior, humble and discredited place in society. And one might further state that although 2500 years have elapsed since the time of the Buddha and although several other religious systems have flourished and blossomed in India from that time up to now, none of these other religions have established an Order of Nuns. There can be little doubt that womankind of the world owe an eternal debt of gratitude to the Buddha for giving them this place of honour.



After the establishment of this Bhikkhunī Sāsana, a number of women from all walks of life joined the Order and their lives and deeds adorn the pages of Buddhist literature. The lives of quite a number of these noble nuns, their strenuous endeavours to reach the goal of freedom and their paeans of joy on attaining this goal are vividly described in the *Therīgāthā* (*Psalms of the Sisters*).

A detailed account of the founding of the Bhikkhunī Sāsana can be found in the story of Pajāpati Gotamī referred to in the text. Buddhist literature is rich in examples of women who have attained distinction. The Anguttara Nikāya gives a very comprehensive record of Buddhist women, bhikkhunīs and upasikās (nuns and laywomen), who did splendid work not only as followers of the Dhamma but as preachers of the Teaching. Bhikkhunī Kundalakesā<sup>8</sup> was one of them. Somā Bhikkhunī's story tells us in unequivocal terms that sex is no bar to progress.

The erroneous belief that prevailed in India that woman was the intellectual and spiritual inferior of man was effectively repudiated and exploded by Bhikkhunī Somā<sup>9</sup> in these words: "How could a woman's nature be counted as inferior when she, with concentrated mind, with clear and purified vision endowed with penetrating wisdom, could pierce through the veils of enveloping ignorance and understand the Dhamma (doctrine) and see life in all its naked reality?"

The fact that the Buddha understood the potentiality of women and their capacity for achieving sublime heights of greatness did not blind him to the failings and frailties inherent in the feminine character and which were so peculiar to her sex. He was able to admonish both men and women to be on their guard against such infirmities and weaknesses. Speaking of women the Buddha says: "The tendency to loose and immoral character is the great bane of womankind,"<sup>10</sup> but that does not mean they are doomed. It means that only a higher degree of vigilance and exertion is necessary on their part in their struggle for the higher life.

However, the Buddha points out the weaknesses and shortcomings of women not with the intention of deriding and mocking them as inferior creatures but with the noble aim of showing them the

difficulties that beset and encumber their efforts to achieve the goal and also to warn them to be on their defence against the onslaught of their passions and the tantalizing attack of their temptations.

It is stated that all the fivefold pleasures of the senses—beauty of form, sound, smell, taste and touch which enthrall and ensnare the minds of men—are all centred and crystalised in the feminine form.<sup>11</sup> With this bewitching power a woman can enslave a man and bring him under her imperious sway.

It is said that a woman entices the heedless man by her glances, smiles, expressions of affections, endearing artful grooming (*dunni-vatthena*) and by amiable alluring speech.<sup>12</sup>

The opening discourse of the Anguttara Nikāya says: “Monks, I know not of any other single form by which a man’s heart is captured as it is by that of a woman. Monks, a woman’s form completely captivates a man’s mind.

“I know not of any other single sound ...  
 I know not of any other single smell ...  
 I know not of any other single flavour ...  
 I know not of any other single touch ...

by which a man’s heart could be fascinated and imprisoned as it could be by the sound, smell, flavour and touch of a woman. A woman’s sound, smell, flavour, and touch fill a man’s mind.

“Monks, I know not of any other single form, sound, smell, flavour and touch by which a woman’s heart is completely captured by these allurements and emotions.”

Here then is a sermon on sex and its almost irresistible power put in plain and unmistakable language, the truth of which no sane person can dare deny. Sex is identified by the Buddha as the strongest impulse, the most dominant instinct in man. If one becomes a bondsman, a slave to one’s sexual urge, passions, completely ensnared by their spell, caught up in their claws—then even the most powerful of men can become a helpless worm; a saintly sage behaves like a silly fool, even a yogi ascending the heights of jhanic ecstasy may come tumbling down to the lowly depths of earthly misery.



"There is no fire like lust.  
Passions do not die, they burn out."<sup>13</sup>

These are the words uttered by the Buddha about the emotion of sex. But it must be remembered that the Buddha did not despise, denigrate and disparage women. He only pointed out their weaknesses and frailties and wanted them to be on their guard. On the other hand, he imbued and implanted in them the lesson how they should steer and regulate themselves so as to be a source of solace and strength to humanity.

Talking about women, the Buddha succinctly comments: "Loose or immoral behaviour is the taint of a woman."<sup>14</sup> But again the Blessed One tersely asserts, "Best among wives is she that pleases her husband,"<sup>15</sup> and further observes, "The wife is the comrade supreme."<sup>16</sup> Goldsmith was only echoing the words of the Buddha when he wrote:

"The perfect wife is much more serviceable in life than petticoated philosophers, blustering heroines or virago queens. She who makes her husband and her children happy is of much greater character than the ladies described in romance whose whole occupation is to murder mankind with shafts from the quiver of their eyes."

This, then, in short, is the place of women in Buddhism. Woman was entitled to an equal place of honour with man, and was in no way to be inferior to man in respect of her ability and capacity to attain the goal of Nibbāna and as a necessary corollary to scale the heights of sublime human achievement attained by man. In all fields of human endeavour, man could not surpass her but at the same time the Buddha recognized the infirmities inherent in her sex, her proneness and proclivity by reason of her sexual make-up to fall more easily into evil ways, to be tempted and seduced into devious paths of immoral behaviour, and the great moral teacher he was—the greatest in the history of humanity—therefore sounded a clarion call of warning and pointed out the danger signals that beset her road to progress.

The primary concern of the Buddha was the moral and spiritual regeneration of all man and womankind: to emancipate them from the bonds of never-ending samsaric existence and make them enter the eternal bliss of Nibbāna. This being so, he was not too much concerned

with the mundane affairs of social reform and political progress. He left these to those to whom they legitimately belonged — rulers, kings, potentates and men in charge of the affairs of state. Throughout his lifetime he never interfered with the institutions of government; he never meddled in political affairs but nevertheless, it cannot be denied and disputed, that in proclaiming an immortal message of human deliverance, at the same time, by reason of the nobility of his supreme teaching, he brought about a remarkable social progress and political enlightenment to all humanity, unique in the history of the world.<sup>17</sup>

The stories recounted here show the impact of the sublime teaching of the Buddha on the lives and experiences of women in the Buddha's time.

Almost all the stories here are translations from the Pali texts and Commentaries. Translating the Pali stanzas into verse has been avoided in order to give a very faithful, easy and readable rendering.

## **The Establishment of the Bhikkhunī Order**

### **The Greatest of Buddhist Women**

#### **Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī**

The life and history of Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī, her ordination and the subsequent establishment of the Order of Buddhist Nuns (bhikkhunīs), is one of the most illuminating and fascinating stories in the realms of Buddhist literature. It reveals at one and the same time the foresighted wisdom and the pervading humanity of the All-Compassionate Buddha. It further shows what power and impact the indomitable unflinching determination and courage of a single woman could produce on the society of her time and day. It also indicates how the kindly intervention of a solicitous intermediary can help to soften and mellow even the most rigid stand, and conduce towards a more flexible and friendly state of affairs.

Above all it is an episode fraught with the most far reaching consequences on the history of the emancipation of women. Two-thousand five-hundred years after the Buddha, the unremitting campaign for women's liberation is still being pursued with undiminished



vigour in all parts of the world. However, over twenty-five centuries ago the Buddha conceded and granted to women, although not without some degree of hesitation, the cardinal right of ordination and entrance to a religious order. The individual most directly responsible for ushering into being this turning point in the liberation of woman-kind was none other than the great Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī. Among the women who influenced the course of feminine emancipation, she stands out as a heroic figure. Among the female disciples of the Buddha she was the foremost. The Buddha assigned to her a place of first importance in seniority and experience. But for her dauntless valour in the face of overwhelming odds, the Buddhist world would never have known the Bhikkhunī Order.

She was born in Devadaha in ancient India into the family of Suppabuddha as the younger sister of Mahā Māyā, the mother of Prince Siddhattha. Her family name was Gotamī. She was named Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī because the soothsayers foretold she would one day turn out to be a leader of vast concourse of people. "Mahā" means great, "Pati" means leader and "Pajā" means an organized assembly of people.

King Suddhodana, who ruled the Sakyans at Kapilavattu, married both Mahā Māyā and her sister Gotamī. Such a marriage was in no way alien to the social concepts of the time and quite in conformity with the social traditions of the day.

Gotamī had a daughter named Sundari Nandā and a son named Nanda. Both of them later entered the Order. When Queen Mahā Māyā died seven days after the birth of Prince Siddhattha, Gotamī, in a unanimous gesture of maternal sacrifice, entrusted her own son to outside nurses and took upon herself the sacred and heavy responsibility of nursing and tending her sister's infant.

In so nurturing and nourishing the future Buddha, she not only earned the gratitude of the entire Buddhist world but also put Prince Siddhattha in a position of obligation to her. Gratitude is not a common quality among ordinary men and women. However, it is the hallmark of the Buddhas. It is one of their prime and prominent characteristics. It is this sense of gratitude among other reasons that prompted the Buddha ultimately to yield to the persistent pleadings of Gotamī and admit her to the Holy Order of Nuns.

On the death of King Suddhodana, Gotamī now without her sister, her husband and son, (son had joined the Order of Monks), decided to renounce the world and all the glitter of mundane existence and take refuge in the life of the homeless. She asked the Buddha for ordination but it was not granted.

Once the Buddha visited Kapilavattu to settle an angry quarrel between the Sakyans and the Koliyans as to the right to draw water from the river Rohini. After the bitter dispute had been settled and the acrimony had subsided, the Buddha, as was his custom, delivered a discourse on the Dhamma which resulted in many young Sakyans joining the Order of Monks. Thereafter the wives of these men led by Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī sought the permission of the Buddha to be ordained as nuns and supplicated thus: "It will be good, O Venerable Sir, if sanction is granted for women to be ordained as nuns and they are admitted to the Order of Bhikkhunis under the Doctrine and Discipline of the Buddha." The Blessed One, however, was not disposed to encourage the intention of Gotamī and replied, "Enough, O Gotamī, let it not please you that women should be allowed to do so." For the second and third time Gotamī reiterated her request, but nevertheless they also met with the same negative response. Thereafter the Blessed One proceeded to Vesali and sojourned in the pinnacle hall. Gotamī, undismayed by the setbacks she had so far received, but with a resoluteness and fortitude of mind that refused to shrink in the face of impediments, decided to follow the Blessed One to Vesali with a band of loyal followers. Here one witnesses a manifestation of a spirit of dauntless optimism on her part that evokes one's admiration and awe.

Lopping off their beautiful locks of hair, casting off their rich gorgeous attire and cladding themselves in coarse saffron coloured garments, they threaded their way on foot to Vesali, a distance of 150 miles. Not having been accustomed to such tormenting ordeals in the past, they struggled and floundered on their journey. Many people on their route were deeply moved by their agonising plight and chivalrously offered them chariots and conveyances, but they politely turned them away and plodded their weary way on foot. It was indeed a heart-rending spectacle. At long last, enfeebled and prostrate with fatigue, they arrived at Vesali and stood at the monastery gates, their



bodies overlaid with dirt and dust—their raiments torn and tattered, their feet swollen and sore with festering blisters.

The Venerable Ānanda, the faithful and devoted attendant of the Buddha, his constant and close associate, affected with pity at this painful, pitiful sight, approached the Master and importuned him thus: "Venerable Sir, Gotamī with her company of followers, worn out with weariness stands haggard and exhausted at the entrance to this hall. They have come a long distance in search of the Blessed One to fulfill a devout aspiration. Please, O Lord, permit women to be ordained as bhikkhunīs under the Doctrine and Discipline of the Blessed One. It would be excellent, Venerable Sir, if women could be allowed to enter the Order." Three times the Venerable Ānanda persisted with his plea, but the Blessed One did not relax.

However, Venerable Ānanda did not despair. When the exertions of an intermediary are sincere and his efforts are directed genuinely to the mitigation of a rigid stand, there is no room for the abandonment of hope. The Venerable Ānanda thereupon resorted to a different approach and with full deference addressed the Enlightened One thus: "O Venerable Sir, are women capable of attaining the higher levels of mental life—the four stages of sanctity<sup>18</sup> once they have come from the home to the homeless life under the Doctrine and Discipline of the Blessed One?" "Yes, Ānanda, they are capable of doing so,"<sup>19</sup> answered the Buddha.

Gaining a valuable foothold in the process of persuasion, Venerable Ānanda hopefully pressed on with his efforts and said, "If, Venerable Sir, they are capable of attaining sanctity, then as the Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī has suckled the Blessed One and breast fed with milk when his mother was no more and thereafter cradled and nursed him and brought him up in life, then Venerable Sir, women may be granted permission to enter the homeless state under the Doctrine and Discipline of the Blessed One." At this point the Venerable Ānanda was touching upon a highly delicate matter. He was touching upon a sense of gratitude, and gratitude is a quality highly extolled by the Buddhas and deeply cherished by them. And in the face of such a fervent appeal by Venerable Ānanda, the Blessed One could do nothing but yield.

However, the Blessed One in his far-seeing wisdom was able to see the dangers and pitfalls inherent in the parallel functioning of two Orders of the Sangha at one and the same time. Therefore he proceeded to impose certain conditions and prescribe certain regulations on the Order of the Bhikkhunīs in order to safeguard and protect the future of both these Orders. The conditions so laid down were:

1. A bhikkhunī (nun) even of a hundred years' standing by the higher ordination (*upasampadā*) should salute a bhikkhu, rise up before him, reverence him and perform all proper duties towards him though he had received the higher ordination that very day.
2. A bhikkhunī should not spend a retreat (rains, *vassa*) in a place where there is no bhikkhu.
3. Every fortnight a bhikkhunī should ask the Order of Bhikkhus the time of *uposatha*<sup>20</sup> meeting when a bhikkhu would come to admonish them.
4. The *pavāra*<sup>21</sup> ceremony after the retreat should be held by a bhikkhunī in the presence of both bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs (to inquire whether through any of the three ways, seeing, hearing, or suspicion, a wrong has been done).
5. A bhikkhunī who has committed a major offence should under go *manatta*<sup>22</sup> in the presence of the Order of both Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs.
6. A female probationer (*sikkhamānā*), who is trained in the six rules for two years, should receive the Higher Ordination from the Order of both Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs.
7. A bhikkhunī should on no account revile or abuse a bhikkhu.
8. From today bhikkhunīs should not give admonition to bhikkhus, but bhikkhus should admonish bhikkhunīs.

These rules and conditions were to be revered, revered, honoured and respected as long as life lasts, and were not to be transgressed under any circumstances whatsoever.

Now the Venerable Ānanda, having learnt these eight cardinal rules from the Blessed One, went to Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī and communicated to her all that the Blessed One had told him. Gotamī very



willingly agreed to abide by the eight cardinal rules and undertook not to transgress them throughout her entire life.<sup>23</sup> Thereupon Gotamī was ordained. She came before the Buddha and saluted him. The Master preached a sermon on the Dhamma and apportioned to her a subject for meditation. Gotamī, the devout disciple she was, followed the injunction of the Buddha, meditated and developed insight (*vīpas-sanā*) and attained Arahātship together with the four *paṭisambhidā*.<sup>24</sup> Her followers also attained Arahātship at the end of the sermon delivered by the Elder Nandaka.<sup>25</sup> While at Vesali, Gotamī, realizing that her life had come to an end—she was one hundred and twenty years old—took leave of the Buddha and passed away.

Thus, for the first time in the history of religion an Order of Nuns was established and women were admitted to the monastic life. Opened were the doors for the ordination of the female sex and the franchise and privilege of entering the Order of Nuns was conferred upon them. Soon the Order of Bhikkhunīs was well and firmly established. Many women in the full bloom of youth, others in the flower of their prime womanhood, still others in the mellow retiring years of old age, all entered the Order of Nuns. They came in vast numbers—the affluent and the destitute, the untutored and the educated, the unsophisticated and the cultivated—they came from all walks of life and sought ordination in the Holy Order of Nuns which lasted for several hundred years. These bhikkhunīs, after they had entered the Order and obtained final deliverance, set about uttering songs of praise, and the paeans of joy or psalms, as they have been called, have been gathered in a book known as the *Therīgāthā* (*Psalms of the Sisters*). These psalms recite the great ecstasy and rapture the nuns obtained by their becoming ordained and thereafter attaining sanctity.

The question is sometimes posed whether the Buddha made the Bhikkhunī Sangha subordinate to the Bhikkhu Sangha. The question does not really arise because what the Blessed One created were two separate and parallel orders, and it was not his intention that one Order should be controlled by the other. The Bhikkhu Order had its own set of chief disciples, the two chief leaders being the Arahāt Theras Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna. In the same way the Bhikkhunī Order also had a set of chief disciples, the two chief being Arahāt Theris Khemā and Uppalavaṇṇā. The fact that the Buddha never

intended that these Orders or organizations should be under the control or authority of any single person or persons is exemplified by the Buddha's observations in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta where he has declared that it was never his idea that he, as the Buddha, should control the Sangha (Order). According to the Buddha, the Sangha was never meant to be a regimented body owing worship and allegiance to one single master. But on the other hand, it was to be a free assembly of men and women dedicated to the noble task of attaining Nibbāna, the final deliverance of the mind, and endowed with full freedom of thought and action that was in keeping with a body of august persons imbued with the ideals of high endeavour and engaged in the noble pursuit of shattering the shackles of *samsāra*, repeated existence.

The question is often asked whether the Buddha's hesitation in granting permission for women to enter the Holy Order was because he regarded woman as inferior to man and thought them to be unfit for such a high vocation. The answer to the question is that at no time did the Buddha proclaim that women were in any way inferior to man in point of intellect or of character or in the capacity to attain Nibbāna. The Buddha's hesitation can only be explained on the basis that he was able to perceive that if women entered monastic institutes, the cardinal quality of celibacy, which was fundamental to the smooth functioning of a monastic institution, would be influenced and affected. And it is because of this that he proceeded to lay down the eight safeguards or conditions. It was these eight safeguards or conditions, these eight rules, that conduced to the functioning of these two institutions with a sense of propriety and decorum. It kept the nuns in the place which was due to them by reason of their sex. It was also these eight rules that promoted harmony and concord and brought about a proper relationship between bhikkhus and the bhikkhunīs. The delayed consent of the Buddha to ordain the women should not be interpreted in any way as an acceptance by the Buddha of the weakness or the infirmity of the female sex. It was, in a way, a means of showing both the bhikkhunīs and the bhikkhus that the step of forming an Order of Bhikkhunīs was pregnant with a certain element of danger and that unless proper precautionary measures were taken it could lead to troubles in the future. The ultimate granting of consent reveals the penetrating insight of the Buddha and his capacity to foresee the future possibilities



of any given course of action. It also shows his sense of gratitude and all-embracing compassion for all classes and all types of beings. It is to be noted that the observance of these eight rules played a very significant and central role in preserving the purity and the sanctity of the two Holy Orders for very long period of time. It is these eight cardinal rules, (*garu-dhammas* in Pali), that was the bedrock upon which the successful superstructure and smooth working of the two Orders was built.

The great right and privilege that was fought for and won by Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī, namely, the right of women to enter the Holy Order and be ordained as nuns, is momentous in the history of religion. Even today there are many religious systems prevalent in the world which do not concede to women the right to be ordained as nuns. Even the few religions that concede this right are beginning to doubt the wisdom of granting so considerable a concession, and questioning the need for such step.

The Buddha stands out as one of the few religious leaders of mankind to have given women such a high place in life as to permit them to be ordained as nuns in the Order of Bhikkhunīs, and has thus opened a completely new chapter in the history of feminine emancipation.

## The Chandāla Maid

### The Problem of Caste

Siddhattha Gotama, the Buddha, was sojourning in Sāvathī (Sravasti), India, in the Jetavana Monastery of Anāthapiṇḍika, the benefactor of the destitute. At that time, the Venerable Ānanda, the devoted disciple and most diligent attendant of the Master, also dwelt in the same monastery.

One day, according to custom, Ānanda the Elder donned his robe with neatness and care and taking bowl in hand entered the city of Sāvathī with measured steps and downcast eyes.

When he had collected enough food from the faithful to still his hunger, he retreated to a quiet corner to partake of his food. After he

had finished his meal, he searched for water and saw a well by the roadside. At that hour a humble Chandāla (a depressed class) damsel, Prakrti by name, was drawing water from the same well. The Elder Ānanda approached her and stood with downcast eyes, holding the bowl with both arms. Then ensued the following dialogue:

*Prakrti*: What do you need?

*The Elder*: Please give me some water to slake my thirst.

- I am a Chandāla maid; no one takes water from us.
- I only want some water to quench my thirst. Water quenches the thirst of all, irrespective of caste, clan or colour.
- Don't you know that there are two castes in this country: the high and the low? I belong to the low caste.
- Caste is something utterly immaterial to me. I am not concerned a wee bit about it. I only need some water to quench my thirst.
- How can I, a Chandāla girl, offer you water? The people of high class dare not trample even our shadows. They avoid us, they spurn us, and if by chance they see us, they will forthwith wash their faces with perfumed water, lamenting: "O we have seen an outcaste." In such a contemptuous manner do they look down upon us.
- I know not of high and low caste, you are just as much a human being as I am. All human beings are all alike. They all belong to the common race of mankind. They have one head, a pair of eyes, ears, a mouth and a nose, etc. The blood that runs in the veins of all human beings is red and not black. What difference is there? What distinction can there be?
- Yes, there is no difference at all physically. Nevertheless, oh, the high and the exalted have done wholesome kamma (actions) and heaped up merit, and are born unto high families. We who have done unwholesome kamma are born as outcastes, as miserable wretches, the despised scum of the earth.



— However, I have learnt from my Teacher, the Supremely Enlightened Master, the noble message:

“Not by birth is one an outcaste,  
Not by birth is one a brahmin,  
By deed one becomes an outcaste,  
By deed one becomes a brahmin” (Sn. 135).

I am least interested about your so-called caste, please do give me some water, as I am in dire need of it.

Prakrti breathed not a word, so dumb-founded was she. The girl bent forward in fear and trembling and graciously offered water to the Venerable Ānanda from the pot, and her heart began to throb faster and faster. The Elder sipped it with warm gratefulness while Prakrti watched on in amazement.

The Venerable Ānanda thereupon proceeded to the monastery. But Prakrti, however, was so enraptured by the tender voice, so bewitched by the charming dignity and the majestic beauty of form of the recluse, that she continued to remain there rapt in utter wonder.

“‘Do give me some water, do give me some water.’ What a voice of sweet cadence; how delicately he spoke to me! Oh, what a handsome striking figure, what a noble dignified demeanour! Why did he come to this Chandāla girl? Am I the only girl in Sāvattī? Is this the only well in this city? Am I not conspicuous in my dress as a Chandāli? Does not my apparel proclaim my caste? Who could be this fascinating marvellous stranger? Whence did he come? Whither will he go? Oh, will he come again for water?” She continued to muse in anguished bewilderment.

Her heart spilling over with these thoughts she scrambled home, cast aside the vessel of water and hastening to her mother, a woman proficient in witchcraft and charms, implored her to cast a magic spell over the Elder.

*The Mother:* What is wrong with you child, what ails you, who is this Elder?

*Prakrti:* ‘Do give me some water, do give me some water, do give me some water’ —O mother, never before have I heard such a delicate voice.

- The one who asked for water must be one of our caste.
- Oh, no, a ravishingly handsome youth, with shaven head, draped in saffron-hued robe, with a bowl in arm, very graceful.
- What are you blabbering child? Could a man with a shaven head be good-looking? Pleasing to the eye? Don't you know that people shave their heads to erase all grace and beauty?
- I don't know mother, he is so lovely, so charming. An embodiment of compassion and modesty, of elegance and dignity.
- Is he one of our caste?
- Yes, he said I also belong to his caste.
- What is that caste, girl?
- The human caste.
- Did you deceive him by not divulging your caste?
- I told him that I am a Chandāli, but he refused to believe it. He repeatedly asked for water, and declared that one becomes a brahmin or an outcaste by action and not by birth. He further spoke of human freedom and dignity. All these days I had been under the mistaken impression that I am a wretched 'sinner,' now I learnt from him that I also belong to one human society, to the common mould of humanity. He gave me light, he is my light. 'Do give me some water, do give me some water,' Oh, what a tender voice!
- Prakrti, because of good kamma performed in the past, people are born unto exalted castes. We are born as Chandālas, as outcastes, as a result of the bad kamma done in the past.
- No, mother, everything is not due to kamma. It is human society that has branded us as outcastes, it is man who has created these artificial divisions. Never mind. I want to know who that young man is, his name and profession.
- According to your description, girl, I believe he must be a disciple of Gotama the Buddha, he belongs to the exalted



Sakya clan. I have heard that his name is Ānanda. He is a bhikkhu, a monk who has renounced the world and all its comforts and joys.

- My dear mother, I implore you, I cannot be without him. I must have him. Use all your charm and magic power, summon all the powers of your witchcraft, and get me Ānanda. Else I will fast to death, you will lose your only daughter.
- My dear daughter, do you know that King Kosala who is ruling our country is a devout benefactor of Gotama the Buddha? If he comes to know of your infatuation and longing for Ānanda, he will exterminate the whole community of Chāṇḍālas. Do you want the king to do that?
- O mother, I beseech you, cast a magic spell and he will come. Without him I will be no more.
- Prakṛti, the Buddha, the Perfect One, has eradicated all passions and defilements. He is the consummate Teacher. His charm surpasses all others. His spell excels any other. However, I shall do my best for you, my dearest daughter, stop wailing, and partake of your food.

In response to the persistent entreaties of her only daughter, the mother kindled a fire with dry cow-dung in the courtyard of the house, sat by the fireside with 108 arka flowers and commenced her incantations. And all the time she was flinging the flowers into the flame, one by one, and chanting a mantra with each flower she threw.

The Elder Ānanda, unable to resist the force of this enchanting sorcery, this enslaving magic, forsook his monastic cell, forgot his chosen way of life and proceeded towards the Chāṇḍāla home. The mother, beholding the approaching recluse, commanded her daughter to arrange a seat. As Prakṛti was getting it ready, the Elder entered the home and drifted into his seat. He noticed the alluring smiles of Prakṛti and was swayed by her mother's enticements. The hour was eventide. The sun was gradually sinking in the western horizon and everywhere a solemn stillness held. The Elder found the atmosphere rather suffocating, he was bewildered and perplexed. Immediately he thought of

the Buddha, remarking: "May my Master of Merciful Wisdom rescue me from this danger."

Now the Omniscient Buddha perceived with his divine eye the plight of his faithful disciple, and out of his boundless compassion recited a Buddhamantra in this verse:

"Should there be a lake pellucid, speckless, fully placid and secure on entering which all dangers, fears and tremblings vanish, then that lake is Nibbāna which the gods and all the yogis, the Noble Ones, reverence. By the (all conquering) power of the truth of these words may good accrue to bhikkhu Ānanda."

This completely overcame the magic spell of the witch and the Venerable Ānanda, rescued from the awful peril, eagerly hurried to his monastery. Prakrti was heart-broken and bitterly disappointed, but she did not give up her love for the Elder. Next morning she attired herself in her most gorgeous apparel and stationed herself on the road along which Thera Ānanda was accustomed to come to Sāvattihī for his daily alms. And while, as usual, the Elder proceeded on his almsround, Prakrti followed him from door to door, and the people wondered at this strange scene.

The Venerable Ānanda, thoroughly disconcerted, retraced his steps to the monastery pursued by Prakrti and recounted to the Master all that had happened. Then the Lord of Compassion sent a message to Prakrti who was standing at the monastery gate. With downcast eyes she came, saluted the Master with clasped hands and sat on one side.

Then the Lord of Compassion, gently addressing the Chandāla girl, questioned her what she wanted to do with the Thera Ānanda.

In her innocent simplicity, Prakrti unfolded the secret of her heart's cherished desire. Thereupon, observed the Master: "Prakrti, go home and obtain your parents' permission."

She rushed home and returned in no time with her parents' consent.

Once again the Buddha spoke:



*The Buddha:* Prakrti there are so many young men in Sāvathī. Why do you love Ānanda who is a bhikkhu who has given up household life?

*Prakrti:* I like him and I love him with all my heart. He gave light to a girl who was in darkness. It was from him I learnt that I am a human being and not a slave, that I too can enjoy human rights. He is the light of my eyes, the hope of all my dreams, the fount of all my life. I want him, I cannot be without him.

— Well then, you must do what I want you to do if you wish to have him.

— If I can have Ānanda, I will do anything your reverence want me to do, Lord.

— If you shave your head, and drape yourself in saffron-hued robes like Ānanda, then you can have him.

— Yes, certainly, Lord, I will dash home and come in that attire.

Prakrti darted to her home, and explained matters to her mother. On hearing this the mother fumed in anger.

— My dear daughter, what is wrong with you? Are you in your senses? Have you gone mad?

— Oh mother, please shave my head, else I will kill myself.

— You stupid girl. It is the hair that adorns a woman best. How hideous will you look when your head is shaved. There is no girl more lovely and more charming than you in the whole of Sāvathī. My beloved darling, be patient, I will find you a magnificent partner.

— I need no one else, I want my Ānanda. To me he is so radiantly handsome, he is so gracefully lovely, what a pleasant delicate voice he has, how delightfully charming he is in his demeanour. He is my life. He is my treasure and all my being.

— Now take your food, child, don't die of starvation.

— Not until you have shaved my head, mother.

The mother thereupon shaved her head lest she die of starvation.

- You look like a typical nun. You will be cheated by the recluses and their teacher, Gotama the Buddha. He knows a marvellous spell by which he entices people like you.

(It was the Buddha's *mettā*, his universal unfathomable love that won the hearts of the people and attracted them to him, and not any ensnaring deceit, or fraudulent trick.)

- Never mind. Come what may, if I get my Ānanda, I am content. There is nothing else I need. I am now going to Jetavana Monastery.

- Do what you like; you will repent your grievous folly.

Prakrti hastened back to the monastery, saluted the Buddha and sat on one side. Many monks, including the Ven. Ānanda, had all assembled at that time.

*Prakrti*: Lord, I have done what your reverence ordered me to do. As you promised, let me have Ānanda.

*The Buddha*: Before you have Ananda, you must answer my questions.

- Yes, my Lord, I'll answer your questions.
- You love Ānanda so much. What is it that lures you most to him?
- His whole body—the organs and the attendant attributes of his body are so pleasing to me. The very sight of him is collyrium to my eyes. His voice is so captivating, he is everything to me.
- What you see as enrapturous in a person, Prakrti, is the outer skin. Beauty is only skin deep, superficial and transitory. Our body is not made of gold, pearls or diamonds or of any other precious stones. There are in this body: hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, nasal mucus, urine, faeces. Behind this painted image, the superficial beauty, is a body full of wounds, here there is neither permanence nor stability. Of bones is this city made, plastered with flesh and blood wherein are stored, old age, ageing and death, arrogance and disparagement of others.<sup>26</sup>



If, perchance, what is inside of this body were to come out, as if a pillow is turned inside out, surely a man would need a knout to drive away the hordes of crows and dogs that would congregate there in large number. Slavish passion is due to selfish desire.

From affection grief arises,  
From affection arises fear,  
For him who is from affection free,  
There is no grief, then whence comes fear?<sup>27</sup>

From the day you fell in love with Ānanda, you underwent untold agony, you did not take food, you had no sleep, you were sighing and sobbing, wailing and lamenting—all these brought you unbearable mental anguish. Now reflect with wise attention whether the body of Ānanda is a thing to be clung to. Is it a thing to be hugged in great glee? Is it something to be yearned for so desperately? All things when clung to fail and disintegrate. All components when hankered for, decompose and fade away.

- Lord, your soothing words have given me much solace. Things are now clear to me. Lord, give me the ordination.
- Yes, Prakṛti, my Dispensation is open to all, irrespective of caste, colour, clan, race or sex. My Dispensation is comparable to the vast ocean. Even as the rivers, Gangā, Yamunā, Sindu, Aciravati, empty themselves into the ocean and lose their identity, so do people of different castes and clans, from different walks of life, enter my Dispensation and the idea of caste, class, clan and any other divisions fade away and vanish. In the ocean, Prakṛti, there is only one flavour and that is the flavour of salt. In my Dispensation which is like the ocean, there is only one flavour, and that is the flavour of Deliverance.

*Ehi tvam bhikkhunī, cara brahma cariyam*  
Come, O bhikkhunī, lead the holy life.

Thus beckoned the Master. Prakṛti became a member of the Order of Bhikkhunīs.

Then the Compassionate One discoursed to her on the simpler side of the Buddhist doctrine in comprehensible language. She gained confidence in the Triple Gem, the *Tri-ratna*: the Teacher, Teaching and the Taught (the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha). Thereupon the Master expounded to her the Four Noble Truths—the eternal verities of suffering or unsatisfactoriness, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering, and the Enlightened One gave her the love-gift of Liberation which raises man from the dungheap of degradation and decay to peace, enlightenment and Nibbāna.

The lucid enunciation of the Master sank deep into her heart and her whole outlook on life underwent a change. Then she prostrated at the feet of the Supremely Enlightened Buddha and besought his forgiveness for the wrong she had done as an uninstructed and unenlightened girl.

This conversion of the Chandāla girl evoked so much confusion in the minds of King Pasenadi of Kosala and the nobility of the city of Sāvathī that there was an uproar. They could not tolerate a member of a Chandāla family being ordained in the Sacred Order of the Buddha, and they proceeded to the monastery to confer and argue about the matter which was one of life and blood, a matter of high prestige to them, but which was one of utter indifference to the Buddha who had always denounced unequivocally the debasing caste system and was the only teacher who endeavoured to blend together in mutual tolerance and harmonious concord those who hitherto were rent asunder by the stupid disparities of caste and class.

The Blessed One, having listened to their remonstrations patiently, commenced to relate the past story of Prakrti:

“Once upon a time in India, there was a Chandāla (outcaste) village by the side of the river Ganga. The chief of the community was known by the name Trishanku. He had an unusually handsome son Sardulakarna by name, deeply versed in the three Vedas and other sciences, The father longed very much to get his son married to a beautiful girl with intelligence. Knowing that there was an exceptionally lovely maiden, Prakrti by name, a daughter of a Brahmin known by the name Pushkarasari, he discussed the matter with the girl’s



father. The brahmin was enraged and sharply rebuked the father of the young man and rejected the proposal.

"Trishanku patiently explained matters in this way: 'Sir, all human beings, wherever they are, whether they be poor or rich, literate or illiterate, ugly or beautiful, dark or fair, they all belong to the one and same human society, to the common race of mankind. Caste and class are man-made divisions.'

"The brahmin, completely won over by his speech and persuasive eloquence, gave his daughter, Prakrti, in marriage to Sardulakarna, the son of Trishanku." Continuing, the Buddha said: "Prakrti, the bhikkhunī before us, was the brahmin's daughter, Prakrti, then. Sardulakarna was this bhikkhu Ānanda, and I myself was Trishanku, the Chandāla Chief."

The king and the retinue who listened to the past story in silent amazement were stupefied, they uttered not a word, but paid their reverence to the Buddha and the Sangha and departed.

## The Virgin's Eye

### Subhā Meets a Libertine

Having accomplished much merit in the past, Subhā was reborn at Rajagaha (present day Rajgir in India), in the family of a respectable brahmin during the time of Siddhattha Gotama the Buddha, the Supremely Enlightened Master. She was enthrallingly beautiful, her body was lovely in all its several parts, so she was named Subhā. When the Master was sojourning in Rajagaha, she gained confidence (*saddhā*) in him and became a lay disciple. Later she became worried about the appalling nature of *samsāra*, the cycle of repeated existence, and realised that sense pleasures are an enslaving bond, a joy that is transient, of little relish, and that safety and freedom lay in giving up, in renunciation. So she sought ordination from Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī.<sup>28</sup> Subhā was diligent. Practising *samādhi* or concentration and rigorously exercising herself in insight meditation (*vipassanā*), she attained the third stage of sanctity (*anāgāmi*), a never-returner to the world of senses after death.

One day Subhā, the bhikkhunī, was entering Jīvaka's mango grove to relax during noon-time. At that time a certain libertine of Rajagaha, in the lustful prime of youth, seeing her entering the forest, was infatuated by her. He barred the way making it impossible for her to go any further. Subhā sought to make him understand that she was one who had renounced and warned him of the bane and curse of sense pleasures, but it was of no avail. Her counsel fell on deaf ears.

The dialogue that ensued is recorded in elegant Pali verses in the *Therīgāthā*.

1. Subhā the bhikkhunī was entering the delightful mango grove. A rake barred her way. To him thus spoke Subhā:
2. "What offence, what crime, have I done to you that you bar my way? O friend, it ill beseems an ordained nun to touch a man.
3. "The Dispensation of the Buddha is dear and precious to me. What training precepts the Master has ordained (for nuns), that I have strictly followed. Free from defilements, purified am I. Why do you stand blocking my way?
4. "Your mind is all upset with thoughts of lust; I am of pure heart. Your heart all discomposed with vile passions, I passionless and free everywhere from lustful yearnings for this carnal body. Why do you stand thus obstructing my way?"

The libertine thereupon answered:

5. "You are so young, so spotless in beauty, in physique and form so handsome. What profits you to be in the Order (in the Holy Life); doff that saffron-hued robe. Come, let us take delight in the blossoming woodland, seeking we our sensual pleasures.
6. "Look, the fragrance of the flowers is being wafted through the air. Behold the vasanta tide (spring) is in full bloom, blossoming with joy. Come, let us take delight in flowering woodland, seeking we our carnal pleasures.
7. "The blossoming crests of the trees swayed by the wind are as if they were chanting welcome song. But you who enter the forest alone, how will you find happiness there?



8. "Into this wild forest, the haunt of ferocious animals, agitated and trembling with marauding elephants reeking with fierce savagery, devoid of all human beings, and emanating terror and fear,<sup>29</sup> do you wish to go there all unaccompanied and alone?
9. "Oh, you enchanting maiden (of matchless beauty)! Like a statue wrought out of shining gold, like a rapturous nymph that frisks and dances about in the celestial garden you would shine radiant draped in elegant clothes of Benares silk.
10. "O you with half open eyes of an elf! I will go under your sway, if we can live and spend our time together taking delight in the forest and relishing in sensual pleasures. There is no other being in all this world dearer and sweeter to me than you. (You are more precious to me than life itself.)
11. "If you pay heed to my words, (abandon and discard your celibate life), come live the lay life gratifying the appetites of the senses. Lovely maidens dwelling in sheltered mansions will attend on you and minister your every need.
12. "Drape yourself with soft silk clothes of Benares. Adorn yourself with garlands, perfume yourself with aromatics and scents. Ornaments, many and diverse, glittering with precious stones will I bestow on you.
13. "You shall lie on a couch, cosy and luxurious, redolent with scented sandalwood, padded with fleecy new coverlets and soft pillows made of swans' feathers and decked with spotless canopies.
14. "Like a lotus that springs into bloom in a spirit-haunted lake (and fades away unwanted by any) so do you, a chaste nun; your body pure, virgin and untouched, grows decrepit and feeble and withers away with old age."

Then asked Subhā the bhikkhunī: ·

15. "Seeing what part of this fragile, grave-filling body, do you take delight in? What is it that you take as sweet essence in this body, reeking with filth?"

The libertine made answer:

16. "Your eyes are like those of the timid gazelle; they are like those of the elf dwelling in the recesses of the mountain. Beholding those eyes of yours, my passions are roused beyond control.
17. "Like the lustre of a golden image is your radiant face. Your eyes are like the petals of a red lotus. The sight of them excites my emotions beyond control.
18. "You of the long-drawn eye lashes! You of the eyes so pure and vivacious! Though you be far from me, I do dream only of your sparkling eyes. O you elf-eyed fairy! There is naught dearer to me than those glittering orbs of yours."

Subhā thereupon replied:

19. "You bar the way of a daughter of the Buddha. Your yearning for me is as foolish and futile as treading a dangerous road. Your pining for me is as stupid and senseless as leaping over Mount Meru or making the moon a plaything of man. (It is a desire that can never be fulfilled.)
20. "Nowhere in this wide world is there any object (animate or inanimate) that could provoke lust in me. I know not what sort of a thing lust is. That lust did I tear up by the roots by following the Noble Path.
21. "As something discarded to a pit of burning coal, as a pot of poison that is destroyed, so have the fires of my lust been quenched forever. I do not know (see) what lust is.
22. "Tempt you, if possible, some woman who has not seen clearly with insight the five aggregates,<sup>30</sup> or one who has not associated with the Buddha. You only harass this nun—a nun who has realized the Four Noble Truths.<sup>31</sup>
23. "My mindfulness do I properly apply in blame and praise, pain and pleasure. Therefore at no time does my mind cling to or hanker after anything. Foul are all conditioned and component things. This I have completely comprehended.
24. "I am a disciple of the Buddha, one who is free from all defiling impulses, bereft of all sordid cravings. Riding the chariot of the



Noble Eightfold Path do I go (to Nibbāna). Pulled out are the arrows of lust. Proceeding to haunts that are lonely and serene, I live there in solitude taking delight in them (enjoying their sylvan serenity).

25. "Oh, I have seen dolls with limbs gaudily painted, puppets made of wood, all cleverly fastened with strings or spindles and made to dance in diverse directions.
26. "But once the wood, strings and spindles are all drawn out, loosened and scattered here and there, no dolls and puppets exist any more. Where will you (in which part) fix your mind?
27. "This body of mine, too, is like a doll. It ceases to exist without its physical organs and attendant attributes. Independent of the organs and attributes no body survives. Where will you (in which part) fix your mind?
28. "Beholding a painting of a woman in a fresco you perceive it as a living woman in your perverted vision. That perception of yours is an illusion.<sup>32</sup>
29. "O you simpleton! you are blind. Do you cling to this body which is just froth and bubble, as something permanently belonging to you? This transitory body which is like a conjuror's trick, a golden tree seen in your dream, a silver image shown by a juggler in the midst of a crowd?
30. "What is this eye but a little ball lodged in the fork of a tree—a bubble full of tears, exuding slime, a blend (of colours, white, black and blue, etc.), all giving the shape and image of an eye."
31. Subhā was attached to nothing; she had no clinging for her eyes. So she, so lovely to those who beheld her, gouged out her eye in one sudden spontaneous movement, and gave it to him saying: "Here then is this eye, (for which you hanker). Take it away."
32. At once the lust in the rake completely vanished. Begging her pardon, he declared: "O you, holy and immaculate one! May you be well! May you recover your sight! Never again will I dare to commit such a heinous crime.

33. "It is as if I have walked into a blazing flame. It is as if I have embraced a venomous snake. What good can accrue by molesting a holy one like you? Please do forgive me."
34. Delivered from the libertine, the bhikkhunī Subhā went her way to the Buddha, the Supremely Enlightened One. There, gazing on the divine resplendent features of the Master, her sight was restored to her in all its glory.

When her sight became as it was before, she was exceedingly delighted, and the Buddha discoursed to her on the means of attaining the highest. Repressing her rapture she developed insight meditation and attained Arahātship, the fourth and the last stage of sanctity, through a thorough grasp of the Dhamma in all its full significance and all its details.

Afterwards, abiding in the bliss and fruition of Nibbāna, and reflecting on what she had attained, she proclaimed her dialogue with the libertine in the verses earlier mentioned.

### **Kisāgotamī<sup>33</sup>**

#### **Only a Pinch of Mustard Seed**

The story of Kisāgotamī is one of the most touching tales recorded in our books. She was born at Sāvattī in a poor family. She belonged to the Gotama clan, and therefore was a kinsman of the Buddha Gotama. On account of her tender, fragile body she was called Kisā (lean) Gotamī. When she had attained age, she was given in marriage to a son of a merchant and in due time she brought forth a child. But alas! When the boy had grown old enough to lisp and play, he died, thus causing untold grief to the mother, who, however, owing to her boundless love towards her only baby could not believe that the child had breathed its last. Gotamī, who would not lose her precious son, rushed hither and thither frantically seeking medicine for her child. No physician in Sāvattī could impart life to the dead.

Gone mad with grief she scurried from door to door sobbing: "Do give some medicine to my child!" The people, however, failed to persuade her that the child was dead. So acute was her agony



that Gotamī could not appreciate what they said. At last an elderly sagacious person who understood the pitiful plight of the weeping mother directed her to the Supreme Buddha, the Most Merciful Master, who was at that time sojourning in Jetavana, the monastery of Anāthapiṇḍika, in Sāvattthī.

Swiftly she scrambled to the monastery, placed the dead child at the feet of the Master and saluting the Blessed One related the pathetic story that would have melted even the hardest heart.

Thereupon the Lord of Compassion, gazing with gentle eyes upon her, softly said: "Sister dear, there is that infallible medicine, I will heal your affliction, only fetch me a pinch of mustard seed from any house in the town." When Gotamī heard these consoling words her joy knew no bounds.

"But mark, Gotamī," interrupted the Master, "that you receive mustard from a house where yet no one has died."

Gotamī, however, on account of her intense delight, failed to understand the significance of the words of the Enlightened One. With the one aspiration of saving her dear baby, she immediately hastened in search of mustard. All the townfolk took pity upon her and readily gave her the mustard that she so desperately sought. But alas, she could not find anywhere a house where *māra*, death had not stalked.

It was evening, the sun was gently sinking into the western sky, the birds were hastening to their nests, and Gotamī at last realized the universality of death. Truth dawned upon her like the flash of lightning and she comprehended that all the sweetest and cherished things of earth are impermanent. All meetings terminate in parting while life fades out in death. She, therefore, walked out of the town, placed her dead child in the charnelfield, and retraced her steps to the monastery saying:

"No village law is this, no city law,  
No law for this clan, or for that alone;  
For the whole world—ay, and the gods in heaven  
This is the law: all is impermanent."<sup>34</sup>

"Did you find the seed, Gotamī?" asked the Blessed One.

"I went, Lord, clasping to my breast  
 The babe, grown colder, asking at each hut—  
 Here in the jungle and towards the town—  
 'I pray you give me mustard, of your grace,  
 A tola-black' and each who had it gave,  
 For all the poor are piteous to the poor;  
 But when I asked, in my friend's household here  
 'Hath any peradventure ever died—  
 Husband, or wife, or child, or slave?' they said:  
 'O Sister ! What is this you ask? The dead  
 Are very many, and the living few!  
 So with sad thanks I gave the mustard back,  
 And prayed of others; but the others said,  
 'Here is the seed, but we have lost our slave!  
 'Here is the seed, but our good man is dead!  
 'Here is some seed, but he that sowed it died  
 Between the rain-time and the harvesting!  
 Ah, Sir ! I could not find a single house  
 Where there was mustard-seed and none had died!  
 Therefore I left my child—who would not suck  
 Nor smile—beneath the wild-vines by the stream,  
 To seek your face and kiss your feet, and pray  
 Where I might find this seed and find no death,  
 If now, indeed, my baby be not dead,  
 As I do fear, and as they said to me."

Thus spoke Kisā Gotamī.

"My sister! Thou hast found," the Master said,  
 "Searching for what none finds—that bitter balm  
 I had to give thee. He thou lovedst slept  
 Dead on thy bosom yesterday; today  
 Thou know'st the whole wide world weeps with thy woe."<sup>35</sup>

"To him whose heart on children and on cattle  
 Is centred, cleaving to them in his thoughts,  
 Death comes like a great flood in the night,  
 Bearing away the village in its sleep."<sup>36</sup>

These words of the Master sank deep into her heart and fully apprehending that impermanence is the hallmark of all phenomenal



existence. She attained the first stage of sanctity (*sotāpanna*) and entered the Order of Nuns. Through the object lesson given her by the all-merciful Master, and through her meditation, before long she reached the crest of purity, the final stage of sanctity by relieving herself of the dirt of life. Later, reflecting on what sublime achievements she had won, she uttered a number of stanzas, the last two of which are as follows:

“Lo ! I have gone  
Up on the Ariyan, on the Eightfold Path  
That goeth to the state ambrosial.  
Nibbāna have I realized, and gazed  
Into the Mirror of the holy Norm.  
I, even I, am healed of my hurt,  
Low is my burden laid, my task is done,  
My heart is wholly set at liberty.  
I, sister Kisā-Gotamī, have uttered this!”<sup>37</sup>

### The Weaver's Daughter<sup>38</sup>

Once the Buddha visited the city of Ālavi, India, and the pious citizens offered him *dāna*, in an almsgiving. After his meal, the Master exhorted them in these words: “Cultivate meditation on death, saying to yourselves: ‘Uncertain is life, certain is death; impermanent indeed is life.’ They who have not practised meditation on death become terror-stricken when death comes to them, and they die in pain and fear even as a man who trembles and fears on suddenly seeing a snake. They who have cultivated meditation on death will have no more fear at the hour of death than a man who, seeing a snake, tosses it away with his stick without fear.”

After this short sermon the Blessed One left Ālavi for the Jetavana Monastery in Sāvattī. The congregation heard the Dhamma, the doctrine, but being mixed up overmuch with the activities of the worldlywise, remained not understanding what they had heard. However, the impressive words of the Buddha went deep into the heart of a sixteen year old poor girl, the daughter of a weaver. These words made an indelible impression in her heart, and they were ever green in her memory. She thought to herself: “Marvellous, indeed, are the

"I went, Lord, clasping to my breast  
 The babe, grown colder, asking at each hut—  
 Here in the jungle and towards the town—  
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words of the Master and it behoves me to cultivate mindfulness of death (*marāṇa-anussati*).” So saying, she determined to cultivate mindfulness of death and this she did successfully for three long years.

Now, we are told that it was the custom of the All-Compassionate Buddha to survey the world daily in the fruition of his compassion. One day as he looked over the world of beings with his divine Buddha power, he perceived the weaver’s daughter. Considering within himself, the Master became aware of the fact that that little girl had cultivated mindfulness of death for three years, and was ripe enough to understand the Dhamma and realize Nibbāna.

So the Blessed One, with his disciples, left Jetavana and arrived at Aggalāva Monastery in Ālavi. The people forthwith invited the Master to an almsgiving.

The pious girl who, too, was told the Master had come, felt very happy, and in her joy thought to herself: “Hither come is my father, my Master, my Teacher who shines like the full moon—the mighty Buddha Gotama. After the lapse of three years I am to see my Teacher. I shall again behold the golden-hued body of the Compassionate One, and hear his sublime Dhamma.”

Her father, however, while leaving home for the workshop, said to her: “Daughter, a garment for a customer is on the loom, and a span of it is yet incomplete. I will finish it today; so do quickly replenish the shuttle and bring it to me.”

The daughter then thought: “It was my earnest wish to listen to the Buddha and now my dear father has thus said to fill the shuttle. But what shall I do now? Shall I listen to the Teacher or fill the shuttle and take it to my father?”

To this poor girl this matter was almost a dilemma. And while she was thus pondering she thought to herself that it was wise to carry the shuttle to her father first lest she should be rebuked for disobeying. So she started filling the shuttle.

Meanwhile the people had offered food to the Blessed One, and were thirsting to hear the Dhamma. But the Master uttered not a word.

“I came hither a journey of thirty leagues for the sake of this poor weaving girl. Even today, at this moment, she finds no opportunity to



be present here. When she finds opportunity I shall proclaim the Dhamma," thought the Enlightened One. And he was silent. Now when the Supreme Buddha is silent, none dare breathe a word.

The weaver's daughter, when she had filled the shuttle, put it in her basket and carried it to her father. On the way to the workshop she saw the gathering of people and took her stand at the extreme corner, and kept on gazing at the supremely Enlightened One, so radiant with *mettā*—pure love. And he, lifting his head, looked at her.<sup>39</sup> Then she knew at once that the Teacher wished her to go to his very presence. Accordingly she put aside the basket and approached him, saluted him with all respect and stood silently until she was spoken to.

Then ensued the following dialogue:

The Master: Where do you came from?

The Weaver's Daughter: I know not, Master.

— Where are you going?

— I know not, Master.

— Do you not know?

— I know, Master.

— Do you know?

— I know not, Master.

Thus the Buddha asked her four questions and she gave seemingly impolite and inappropriate answers. The assembly, who lacked the eye of wisdom, were offended for they knew not the import of the words uttered by the girl. They lost their tranquillity and started rebuking the innocent girl. Then the Buddha intervened and silenced them, and, to make the answers clear to the inadvertent assembly, he asked the girl four more questions.

"O child, when I asked you 'Where do you come from?' why did you say, 'I know not'?"

"Lord," said the girl. "You know well that I come from home. But you meant 'From where did you come to take birth here?' This I know not."

Then the Buddha asked yet another question. "Child, when I asked you 'Where are you going?' why did you say, 'I know not'?"

"Lord, you knew well that I was going to the weaver's shop with my basket in my hand. But the Lord meant, 'When you go hence, where will you be reborn?' This I know not."

Then the Buddha asked a third question. "When I asked you 'Do you not know?' why did you say, 'I know?'"

"Lord, I know well that I shall surely die and therefore did I say, 'I know.'"

And then the Buddha asked the fifth and the last question. "When I asked you 'Do you know?' why did you say, 'I know not?'"

"Lord, I know well that I shall some day die, but when I shall die, whether in the night or during the day time, I know not, and therefore did I say 'I know not.'"

Now the Blessed one praised her and congratulated her, saying to her, "Child, you have answered rightly the questions I asked you."

Thereupon, the Enlightened One addressed the assembly in these words: "You failed to understand the words she spoke, you were merely affronted. They who lack the eye of understanding, they indeed are blind. They who possess the eye of understanding are indeed the possessors of eyes."

In this connection the Buddha uttered the following verse:

"This world is blind, only a few here can see clearly.  
A few go to a heavenly realm, like birds freed from the net.  
(Few are they that escape the net of Māra, Death,  
And attain Nibbāna, the Deathless.)"<sup>40</sup>

In the end the girl attained sainthood and went to her father with the basket. There she died an accidental death being struck by the shuttle in the loom, and was reborn in the Tusita heaven. Her dear father, almost mad with sorrow, approached the Buddha, the Highest Consoler, with intense grief and begged of him to still his pain. Thereupon the Compassionate One spoke to him very tenderly and assuaged his pain. He then gained *saddhā*—confidence, entered the Order and solved the problem of life, by realizing the Four Noble Truths: suffering or unsatisfactoriness, its cause, its cessation and the way leading to the cessation of suffering.



## **Upagupta and the Dancing Girl**

It was evening, the sun was gradually sinking in the western horizon. The glowing full moon was slowly emerging in the east. The day was done and darkness had fallen from the wings of the night. At that time a follower of the Buddha, Upagupta by name, an ascetic who was away from his hermitage, lay asleep on the dust-laden road in the open, under the canopy of a dusky sky, by the city wall of Mathura, India.

Lamps were all out, doors were all shut and everywhere a solemn stillness held. Suddenly he was awakened by the tinkling of anklets. It was the dancing girl, adorned in fine jewels, decked in glittering ornaments, and draped in a pale-blue mantle. She was walking with measured stride towards the ascetic. She stopped, lowered her lamp and knelt down, not out of pity or curiosity. She gazed on the austere handsome face of the young ascetic.

"O ascetic, forgive me," pleaded the girl. "The filthy earth is not a fit bed for you. You are in the blossoming prime of life. Come, join me to go to my mansion."

The ascetic then answered in a voice of delicate cadence: "O girl, do leave me alone and go on your way. I will visit you when you need me most. This is not the time for me to accompany you."

Suddenly came a thunder storm with flashes of lightning. In trembling fear and terror, the dancing girl disappeared.

### **The Festival of Flowers**

Days and months passed. Now it was vasanta-tide, trees were in full bloom, the birds' melody was floating in the air. At eventide the citizens had gone to the woods for the festival of flowers. It was full moon day. Upagupta, the young ascetic was strolling along a desolate street, and passing through the city gate beheld a wailing woman lying by the side of a wall. She had been stricken with the black pestilence. Pustules had erupted all over her body, they had burst open and her whole being was a reeking mass of painful ulcers. She had been discarded, driven away by the town-folk, after branding her a miserable wretch. She lay there weeping, a pitiful pathetic figure—*forlorn and desperate.*

The gentle ascetic sat by her side, softly placed her head on his knees, moistened her lips with water and soothed her body with balm and so relieved her of her scorching pain.

"Compassionate one, may I know who you are?" asked the woman in a low agonised voice.

"I promised to visit you when you need me most and here I am," replied Upagupta in serene calmness.

After Rabindranath Tagore's "Fruit Gathering"

## **Kundala Kesā (Curly-hair)<sup>41</sup>**

### **The Maiden Who Married a Thief**

Kundalakesā (Curly-hair), also known as Bhaddā, was the only daughter of a prosperous merchant of Rājagaha. She was exceedingly beautiful and her parents were jealously protecting her to prevent her getting entangled in some undesirable act of sensual misbehaviour. At about this time, a young man of the same city was caught in an act of robbery. On the order of the king, the city guards had his hands bound behind his back and led him to the place of execution, whipping him at every junction. Though a rapacious robber, he was handsome and impressive. At that time, Bhaddā, dwelling in the topmost floor of the palatial mansion, heard the shouts of the excited crowd down below. Out of curiosity she looked down and beheld through the lattice the fine figure of the handsome robber. Her heart completely enslaved by the charm of his commanding presence, she fell in love with him. So great was her longing for the young man that she fell prostrate on her bed and refused to touch even a morsel of food.

When questioned by her anxious parents as to her strange and baffling behaviour, she replied: "If I can have that young man who was led through the streets today by the guards, I shall live; if not I shall die."

"My daughter," replied the distraught father, "do not behave in this manner. You shall have a more suitable partner, one who would be our equal in birth, family and wealth."

"I shall have no one else," wailed the daughter. "Life will be worth living only if I can have him."



Unable to appease her, the father, out of overwhelming love for his only child, bribed the guards and officers who were in charge of the robber, and manoeuvred to have him released, and have another innocent man put to death instead. But the king was informed that the real robber was executed.

The parents gave their only daughter in marriage to this robber. Bhaddā was very fond of her husband. Decked in her jewels and ornaments, she ministered to his needs herself. The robber avariciously coveted her jewels and plotted a scheme to kill her one day. Bhaddā, noticing that her husband was refusing to eat, asked him:

"What ails you, my beloved, are my parents angry with you?"

"Nothing of the sort," retorted her husband.

"What is the matter then?" pleaded Bhaddā.

"It is this, Bhaddā," replied the robber. "That day when I was taken to the Robbers' Cliff for execution, I made a vow to the cliff deity that if my life were spared, I would bring a thanks-offering. It was through the powers of the deity I saved my life and gained you for my wife. Now how can I fulfil, my vow? I am worried," lamented the husband.

"Beloved, do not worry, be calm, I will attend to it," soothingly replied Bhaddā. Thereupon she devoutly prepared an offering and informed her husband: "Come, let us go." The husband wanted her to put on her most costly garments and adorn herself with her most precious jewels. She did so, and they proceeded to the notorious cliff with their retinue of attendants. When they reached the foot of the mountain, the robber, in order to have her in his power, directed the attendants to return home. Thereupon Bhaddā was under the sole control of the robber who took her in his arms and climbed to the mountain top. One side of this mountain was a precipitous cliff from the top of which robbers were flung. Hence it was called "Robbers' Cliff."

When they reached the top, Bhaddā asked her husband to make the offering. He stood unmoved and silent. Then she implored: "Why don't you speak, my lord?" The husband retorted: "I did not come here to make any offering. I deceived you. I only wanted to kill you and escape with the jewels and ornaments."

Frightened with fear and terror of impending death, she said meekly: "My beloved, both my jewels and my person belong to you. I am your helpless slave and vassal. Why do you speak in this way?" The robber's only unrelenting reply was: "I will kill you." Then she said: "Please take all these jewels and ornaments and spare my life. What will you gain by killing me?"

"If I were to spare your life, you will go home and tell your parents what had happened, and then they would slaughter me. Lament not, there is no alternative, I will put you to death. Take off your outer robe and wrap in it the jewels you are wearing!" commanded the ruthless robber.

Bhaddā did not become faint-hearted. She did not become alarmed and confused. She quietly thought to herself: "Well, I will devise a way of dealing with this wicked man," and told the robber: "Lord, from the day my parents rescued you from the execution guards, at my request, I have been looking after you, faithfully and devotedly. This will be the last time I am able to see you." So muttering, she embraced him in front and then as if embracing him from the back, instantly put one hand to his shoulder and the other to the small of his back and flung him over the cliff into the valley down below.

The deity dwelling on the mountain, noticing Curly-hair's feat of valour and cunning subterfuge, applauded her and rejoicingly proclaimed:

"Not in every case does man become wise,  
Woman, too, is wise when swift to see."

It is the teaching of the Buddha that lust of whatever kind and in whatever form, whether it be lust for wealth and gold, or lust for carnal pleasures and sexual attachment, always leads to a person's ultimate doom. Excessive avarice for gold resulted in the robber meeting with a miserable death. A like yearning for sexual passion nearly led Bhaddā to a similar fate. It is only by overthrowing the shackles of greed and covetousness that the percipient and wise can make their way to Nibbāna; and the sooner one can comprehend this, the earlier could the goal be reached, and persons like Bhaddā who was quick enough to perceive, were indeed exceedingly fortunate.



Thereafter, Bhaddā pondered deeply over the incident and reflected to herself: "If I go home, my parents will question me. If I were to say, he sought to kill me for my jewels, and therefore I had done him to death, they would not believe me. However, I am done with home. Never again will I go there." Saying this, Bhaddā flung away her jewels and ornaments, and entered the Order of the white-robed Nigaṇṭhas (Jains). As she wished to practise extreme austerities, they tore out her hair with a palmyra comb. But the hair grew again and in close curls. So she became known as "Kundalakesā" or Curly-hair. She learned all that they had to teach her, but dissatisfied, she approached other learned teachers, mastered their teaching and gained much knowledge and proficiency. Nevertheless, when she felt that none could excel her in debate, she went about carrying a branch of a rose-apple tree in her hand. When people engaged her in debate or discussion, she put questions none could answer and people dared not challenge her in debate, and went away moaning: "Here comes the nun of the rose-apple."

It became her habit to plant her rose-apple branch in a heap of sand at the gate of some village or town. Thereupon she would issue a challenge: "Whoever is able to join issue with me in debate, let him trample this rose-apple branch under his feet." None dared to approach the branch, none could subdue her in controversy. And if after a week the branch still stood, she took it and departed. When one branch withered, she would get a fresh one.

One day she came to Sāvattī, set up the branch at the gate of the city, and left to seek alms. At that time, the Supreme Buddha, Siddhattha Gotama, was dwelling in the Jeta Monastery. One of his chief disciples, the Elder Sāriputta, the Captain of the Norm—Dhamma Senapati, as he was generally known, observing the branch, questioned the children why it was planted there. The children explained its significance to the Elder. Thereupon the Elder Sāriputta declared: "If that is so, trample the branch under your feet," and they did so, shouting and yelling and kicking up the dust in the manner of children. Then Curly-hair returned and inquired from the children who had trampled down the branch. Learning that the Elder had instructed the children to trample the branch, she asked the Venerable Sāriputta: "Bhante (venerable sir), did you direct the children to trample upon

my rose-apple branch?" "Yes, sister, I did," replied Venerable Sāriputta. "If that is so, let us have a debate," suggested Curly-hair. The Elder agreed and she put all her questions to the Elder which he satisfactorily answered. As she had no more questions to ask, she became silent. Then the Elder said: "You have asked me so many questions and I have answered them all, now I too would like to ask you but one question." "Yes, Bhante, please do so," replied Bhadda. "Sister, what is One?"<sup>42</sup> asked Venerable Sāriputta. Curly-hair was completely non-plussed and dumbfounded, and said: "I know not, Bhante." Then he taught her the Dhamma, the Doctrine, and her heart was so captured by it that she fell at his feet, saying: "Bhante, I take refuge in you." Then the Elder Sāriputta said: "Sister, do take refuge in the Supreme Buddha," and the Elder handed her over to the bhikkhunīs and had her admitted to the Bhikkhunī Order. Through intense meditation, calm and insight, (*samatha-vipassanā*), she attained Arahatsip, the final stage of sanctity, together with the four *paṭisambhida*<sup>43</sup> and thus became a consummate one, an Arahāt.

The monks who assembled in the hall discussed the incident: "Kundalakesā, having fought a fierce battle with a robber, had gained ordination, and having heard only a little of the Dhamma she has become an Arahāt." Then the Buddha entered the hall and on learning what they had discussed said: "O monks, do not measure the Dhamma I have taught as 'little' or 'much.' One sentence of the Dhamma is much better than a mere jumble of meaningless words. He wins no victory who overcomes other robbers, but he that vanquishes the robbers that are his own defilements, is really the triumphant victor." Further said the Master:

"One may utter a hundred verses—a mere conglomeration of senseless words. But one single verse on hearing which one is rendered calm and pacified is better than all that."

"One may overpower and conquer in battle,  
a thousand times, a thousand men,  
but yet he remains the Greatest Conqueror  
who conquers and overpowers himself."<sup>44</sup>



## A Metamorphosis<sup>45</sup>

### The Mother of Two and the Father of Two

"What good neither mother nor father nor any other kinsman can do to a man, a well-directed mind does to him and thereby ennoble him."<sup>46</sup>

This instruction was given by the Buddha while he was staying at the Jetavana Monastery in Sāvattthī with reference to a treasurer. The story begins in the city of Soreyya and ends in the city of Sāvattthī.

Soreyya, the treasurer, while on his way for a bath in a carriage with an intimate friend of his, saw the golden-hued body of the Venerable Mahā Kaccāna, the Arahāt Elder, as he was donning his robe to enter the city for alms. Soreyya, being allured by the hue of the Elder's body, at once thought to himself: "Oh, that this Elder may become my wife, or the hue of my wife's body become like the hue of this Elder's body." No sooner had he thought thus than Soreyya was transformed into a woman.<sup>47</sup> Being thoroughly disconcerted, he descended from the carriage and took to his heels while his friend remained amazed, and said, "What does this mean?"

When the friend returned home Soreyya's parents inquired after their son and he answered that he imagined Soreyya ran home after the bath. The parents searched for him everywhere and failed to find him. They were very sad and wept bitterly. Even a *dāna*, food and other requisites, was given to the Sangha, the members of the Order, and thus the religious rites were also performed.

Soreyya, now a woman, followed a caravan bound for Takkasilā (Taxila as the Greeks called it). The members of the caravan thought to themselves: "Our treasurer in Takkasilā is not married and needs a wife. We will tell him about this enthrallingly beautiful woman and he will reward us." Having reached their destination they had brought him a jewel of a woman. Now when she was brought before the treasurer, he was enchanted by her beauty of form, he fell in love and made her his consort. She had two sons by this treasurer of Takkasilā. Soreyya, who was the father of two sons when he had been at the city of Soreyya, was now the mother of two more sons.

At this time Soreyya's carriage-companion set out from the city of Soreyya with his carts and entered Takkasilā. One day, we are told, when the woman Soreyya was peeping down into the street from the palace, she noticed a person who was one of her friends when she had been in the city of Soreyya. Immediately she summoned him and entertained him very generously. The latter, not aware of the reason for all this courtesy, asked her why she was so exceedingly liberal to an unknown person. Then said the host, "I know you well; do you not reside in the city of Soreyya?" "Yes, I am from Soreyya." Thereupon she inquired after the health of her parents, her former wife and sons. "Do you know them?" queried the guest. "Yes, sir, I know them very well. They also had a son. Where is he now?"

"My lady, I beg you, let us not speak of him," and he gave a full account of the incident. To the utter amazement of the guest she said, "I am that son." "What are you saying? He was an intimate friend of mine, he was like a celestial youth, he was a man." "Never mind, I am he all the same." Then she told him how he had seen the great Elder Kaccāna and the thoughts he entertained and divulged the secret. She related the entire story and the friend was deeply touched, and remarked that what she had done was utterly blameworthy and suggested that she should implore the Elder Kaccāna's forgiveness. She agreed. Thereupon the friend approached the Elder who was at that time residing near the city of Takkasilā and invited him for alms the following day. The Elder accepted the invitation and they gave him *dāna* the following forenoon. The friend came with the lady (Soreyya), caused her to pay obeisance to the Elder, and begged him to pardon her. Thereupon the Elder wished to know the cause, and the friend explained how she was transformed from a man into a woman.

The Elder then observed: "Very well, rise, I pardon you." No sooner were these words uttered than she was transformed from a woman into a man. Thus did Soreyya undergo two transformations in one life. Now he did not desire to remain a layman any longer. Then the treasurer said to him: "Good friend, be not unhappy. You are the mother of these two boys and I am the father, they are truly sons of us both. Let us therefore continue to live here."

Then replied Soreyya: "Friend, I have under gone two transformations in this life. First I was a man, then I was a woman, and now



I have again become a man. First I became the father of two sons, and recently I became the mother of two sons. Please do not think that after having undergone two transformations in one life, I shall ever live the household life again. I shall join the Order under my noble teacher Mahā Kaccana. It is your duty to care for these two boys. Please do not neglect them." So saying Soreyya embraced the two boys and kissed them, and handing them over to their father, renounced the world and became known as Soreyya Thera.

The people, who had become aware of all that had happened, had their curiosity aroused, and going to the Elder, questioned him: "Which pair of sons, venerable sir, do you love more?" "The pair of which I am the mother," answered the Elder.

Later he went into solitude and through heedful meditation attained Arahatsip, the acme of purity, together with the supernormal faculties.

Thereafter the people who came to see him asked the same question and the Elder Soreyya said: "No household affection, whatsoever, do I bear toward any." The monks, who disbelieved the Elder, reported the matter to the Blessed One. Thereupon the Master said: "Monks, my son does not lie. Since the day he attained sanctity he bears no affection toward any. That which neither mother nor father could grant, a well-directed mind confers on living beings."

## Dhammadinnā

### Teacher of the Dhamma

When Venerable Ānanda was seeking the creation of the Bhikkhunī Order, one of the questions that he asked the Buddha was: "Lord, are women, after going forth from the house life into homeless in the Dhamma and Discipline declared by the Perfect One, capable of realizing the fruit of stream-entry, of once-return, or non-return, or Arahatsip?" The Buddha replied: "They are, Ānanda."

Many bhikkhunīs did indeed become Arahats, and a few became outstanding teachers of the Buddha-dhamma. Dhammadinnā became the foremost bhikkhunī in her depth of understanding of the teachings.

Dhammadinnā had been married to the wealthy Visākha, who had not only become a follower of the Buddha, but had become an *anāgāmi*, the third of the four stages of sanctity. Because he realized the truth of the Dhamma, he wanted to share his knowledge with his beloved wife. Therefore he encouraged her to ordain as a bhikkhunī.

After a very short time practising meditation in seclusion, Dhammadinnā returned to Rājagaha. There her former husband, Visākha, questioned her about her Dhamma wisdom:

“Lady, ‘personality, personality’ (sakkāyo) is said, what is called personality by the Blessed One?”

“Friend Visākha, these five aggregates affected by clinging are called personality by the Blessed One; that is, the form aggregate affected by clinging, the feeling aggregate affected by clinging, the perception aggregate affected by clinging, the formations aggregate affected by clinging, and the consciousness aggregate affected by clinging are called personality by the Blessed One.”

“Lady, ‘cessation of personality, cessation of personality’ it is said. What is called the cessation of personality by the Blessed One?”

“Friend Visākha, it is the remainderless fading away and ceasing, the giving up, relinquishing, letting go and rejecting of that same craving. This is called the cessation of personality by the Blessed One.”

“Lady, ‘the way leading to the cessation of personality, the way leading to the cessation of personality’ it is said. What is called the way leading to the cessation of personality by the Blessed One?”

“Friend Visākha, it is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.”

Visākha continued to ask questions concerning clinging, how the personality view comes to be, whether the Noble Eightfold Path is conditioned or unconditioned, about the three aggregates, questions on concentration, on formations, on the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, on the kinds of feeling, on underlying tendencies. Then Visākha asked an unanswerable question:



"Lady, what is the counterpart of Nibbāna?"

"Friend Visākha, you have pushed this line of questioning too far; you cannot find a conclusion to this line of questioning. For the holy life, friend Visākha, merges in Nibbāna, culminates in Nibbāna, ends in Nibbāna. If you wish, friend Visākha, go to the Blessed One and ask him about the meaning of this. As the Blessed One explains it to you, so you should remember it."

Then the lay follower Visākha, having delighted and rejoiced in the bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā's words, rose from his seat, and after paying homage to her, keeping her on his right, he went to the Blessed One. After paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and told the Blessed One his entire conversation with the bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā. When he finished speaking, the Buddha told him:

"The bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā is wise, Visākha, the bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā has great understanding. If you had asked me the meaning of this, I would have answered you in the same way as the bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā has answered you. Such is the meaning of this and so you should remember it."

Cūlavedalla Sutta, M. 44

Trans. by Ven. Ñānamoli

## Visākha

### The Buddha's Chief Benefactress

The Eastern Monastery in Sāvattthī was the donation to the Buddha by the devoted lay-woman, Visākhā. She was singled out by the Buddha himself as the foremost among his women followers. Yet this story of Visākhā indicates the way that women were judged in those days, and the admonitions given to her by her father reveal the restrictions placed upon women. Despite the attitude held toward women, and despite the circumscribed life such a woman had to lead, through her belief in the Teachings of the Buddha, Visākhā was able to rise above such limitations.

Visākhā was born in the city of Bhaddiya in the kingdom of Anga. Dhananjaya, the king's treasurer was her father, Sumanādevi,

her mother. Visākhā was just seven years old when she devotedly listened to the clear-worded exposition of the Master and attained the first stage of sanctity. As was the custom of that period, at the age of sixteen she was given in marriage to Puṇṇavaddhana, the son of Migāra, the treasurer.

This is the story that has been reported. When Puṇṇa was asked by his parents to choose for himself a suitable wife, he said, "Only if I can find a maiden endowed with the 'Five Beauties,' I will do as you say." "But what are these 'Five Beauties,' dear son?" asked the parents.

"Beauty of hair, beauty of flesh, beauty of bone, beauty of skin, and beauty of youth," replied Punna.

"For in the case of a woman of great merit, the hair is like a peacock's tail, and when it is released and allowed to fall, it touches her ankles, the ends curling upward. This is the first, Beauty of Hair.

"Her lips must have the colour like that of a bright red gourd, and they must be even and soft to the touch. This is the second, Beauty of Flesh.

"For the third, Beauty of Bone, her teeth must be white and even without any interstices, and they must shine like a row of diamonds set upright or like an evenly cut conch shell.

"Her skin, without the use of sandalwood or rouge or any other cosmetics, should be as smooth as a garland of water-lilies and as white as a garland of Kanikāra flowers. This is Beauty of Skin, the fourth beauty.

"The fifth and last beauty, Beauty of Youth, would be that even though she had brought forth children ten times, her youth would be as fresh as though she had borne but once."<sup>48</sup>

Immediately Puṇṇavaddhana's mother invited a hundred and eight brahmins, treated them cordially and asked them to go forth in search of a maid with the "Five Beauties." Before she sent out the brahmins she gave them much money and to each a costly golden garland, and said: "When you find a maiden of these 'Five Beauties,' deck her with a golden garland."



## The Art of Choosing a Girl

Accordingly the brahmins proceeded, and finding no such girl in all the great cities, entered Sāketa. The day on which they entered was the "Public Day" and the people were celebrating the festival. On this day, it is said that all the people—even those who do not ordinarily go out of their houses—would come forth with their attendants and walk to the banks of the river. And it is said that young men of wealth and position of the warrior caste would stand along the road, and when they behold a beautiful girl of equal birth with themselves, deck her with a garland of flowers.

Visākhā, who was then about sixteen years of age, adorning herself beautifully, proceeded to the bank attended upon by many maids. But there was an unexpected rain on this day, and the maids scampered as fast as they could and sought shelter in a hall. Visākhā, however, in spite of the heavy rain, kept to her usual gait.

The brahmins then said to Visākhā: "Dear girl, your attendants hurried for shelter and entered the hall without having their garments and jewels soaked; but you failed to hasten your pace and have got drenched."

In response thus spoke Visākhā: "Dear friends, speak not thus. I am stronger than my attendants, and I have good reasons for not hurrying myself.

"For friends, there are four persons who do not appear to advantage while running; and there is another reason besides.

"An anointed king, friends, does not appear to advantage if, decked in all the glamour of his jewels, he girds up his loins and scurries about the palace-court. By so doing he will certainly incur unfavourable criticism, and people will say of him, 'Why is this great king running about like a common householder?'

"Likewise the king's state elephant, when fully caparisoned, does not appear to advantage while running; but, when he moves with the natural grace and measured dignity of an elephant, he does appear to advantage.

"A monk does not appear to advantage while running. By so doing he would only evoke unpleasant reproach, and people

will say of him, 'Why does this monk gallop about like a common householder?' But if he walks in a tranquil and serene gait, he does appear to advantage.

"A woman does not appear to advantage while running. By so doing she will evoke only unpleasant reproach and people will say of her, 'Why does this woman scamper about like a man?'"

"These are the four persons that do not appear to advantage while running."

"But, what, dear girl, is the other reason?" asked the brahmins.

"Dear friends, mothers and fathers bring up a daughter seeking to preserve intact and unbroken the bigger and smaller organs of her body; for we are goods for sale, mere merchandise to be auctioned and they bring us up with the intention of bartering us off in marriage to some other family. The result is that were we, while running, to trip over the hem of our skirt or some obstacle on the ground and fall and break either a hand or a foot, we would be a burden to our family. But if the clothes we wear get wet, they will dry. Bearing this consideration in mind, dear friends, I did not run."<sup>49</sup>

The brahmins discerned that she possessed the "Five Beauties" and acclaiming her, they decked her with all of the golden garlands and brought the news to Migāra, the treasurer.

### Ten Admonitions

Great preparations were made for the wedding by both parties. Dhananjaya, the treasurer, gave his daughter much wealth, cattle, men-servants and women-servants, and provided all that was necessary for Visākhā, and in administering her the final admonitions spoke thus: "Dear daughter, there are these items of right conduct and good manners you must observe so long as you live with your husband:

1. So long as you live in the house of your father-in-law, the indoor fire is not to be carried outside.
2. The outdoor fire is not to be carried inside.
3. Give only to him that gives.
4. Give not to him that gives not.
5. Give both to him that gives and to him that gives not.



6. Sit happily.
7. Eat happily.
8. Sleep happily.
9. Tend the fire.
10. Honour the household divinities.

And this is the true meaning of the ten admonitions:

1. If you discern any fault in your father-in-law or in your husband, say nothing about it when you go to this or that neighbour's house; for there is no fire that may be compared to this fire.
2. If either women or men in your neighbours' houses speak ill of your father-in-law or of your husband, you must not bring home the slander that you have heard them mutter and repeat it, saying, 'So and so said this or that unkind thing about you'; for there is no fire comparable to this fire.
3. You should lend only to those who return borrowed articles.
4. You should not lend to those who do not return borrowed articles.
5. When poor kinsmen and friends seek your assistance, you should give it to them, whether or not they are in a position to repay.
6. 'Sit happily' means that when a wife sees the approach of her mother-in-law or her father-in-law or her husband, she should stand as a sign of respect and not remain seated.
7. 'Eat happily' means that a wife should not eat before her mother-in-law and father-in-law and her husband have partaken of their meals. She should serve them first, and when she is sure that they have had all they care for, then, and not until then, may she herself partake of her meals.
8. 'Sleep happily' means that a wife should not go to bed before her mother-in-law and her father-in-law and her husband have gone to bed. She should first perform the major and minor duties which she owes them as a matter of conjugal obligation, and when she has so done, then she may herself lie down to sleep.

9. 'Tend the fire' means that a wife should regard her mother-in-law and her father-in-law and her husband as a flame of fire.
10. 'Honour the household divinities' means that a wife should look upon her mother-in-law and her father-in-law and her husband as her divinities deserving her respect.

Visākhā was very generous in her ways. All the gifts she was showered with on her wedding day she distributed among the various families in the city.

Visākhā was also very kind and considerate. It is said that at midnight, on the very day of her marriage, one of her mares gave birth to a foal. She immediately went with her maid-servant and caused the animal to be bathed in hot water and anointed with oil.

Now, we are told that Migāra, the treasurer, Visākhā's father-in-law, at that time was a follower of the Nigaṇṭhas (Jaina). However, because of Visākhā's foresight and discerning nature, she invited the Blessed One to her father-in-law's mansion. Because of her, the whole family followed the Buddha and his Teaching, and her father-in-law even attained the first stage of sanctity. This is why Visākhā is honoured with the title: "Migāra's Mother" though she was his daughter-in-law.

Visākhā was renowned as the chief benefactress (*dāyikā*) of the Buddha. Her faith and delight in the Dispensation of the Buddha (*Buddhasāsana*) was boundless. She caused a large monastery (*Pubbārāma*) to be erected for the Buddha and his disciples.

On the day on which the monastery was completed and the opening ceremony was in progress, towards evening, Visākhā, in the company of her children and grandchildren, walked around the monastery chanting five solemn stanzas in a voice of unusually delicate cadence, for she had consummated a wish which she had conceived in the dim distant past.

The monks, hearing her voice, informed the Master thus: "Lord, we have never heard Visākhā singing. Today, however, she is walking round the monastery with her children and grandchildren chanting and singing. Has she gone into a frenzy, Lord?" inquired the monks. Thereupon, the Blessed One explained to them:



“Monks, she is not singing. Her ancient wish is now fulfilled and she is giving vent to a joyful utterance as she moves about,” and he related the story of the past and made known her aspiration of yore. Then the Buddha uttered this verse about Visākhā:

“As from a heap of flowers many a garland is made,  
so by one born as a human being many a good deed  
should be done.”

Dhp.v. 53

### Notes:

1. *Nāsti strīnām prthagyajno  
Na vrataṃ napyuposathanī  
Patim susrusate yena  
Tena svarge mahīyate* (Manu, v. 153).
2. *Kindred Sayings*, i, p.iii.
3. *Kindred Sayings*, i, p.45.
4. *Jananī janma bhūmis ca svargādapi garīyasi.*
5. A. 4:265 ff.
6. A. 4:238 ff.
7. i. *saddho*, ii. *hirimā ottāpi*, iii. *akkodhano anupanāhi*, iv. *anissuki*, v. *amacchari*, vi. *anaticāri*, vii. *sīlavā*, viii. *bahussuto*, ix. *āradhaviṛiyo*, x. *upatthita sati*, xi. *paññavā* (S. 4:143).
8. See below, p. 329
9. *Psalms of the Sisters.*
10. Dhp. 242.
11. *Pancakāmagunā ete ithirūpasmim dissare—rupā saddhā rasā gandhā phoṭṭhabbā ca manoramā* (A.3:69).
12. *Gradual Sayings*, iii, p. 57.
13. Dhp. 251.
14. *Ibid.*, 242.
15. S. 1:7.
16. S. 1:37.
17. Those interested in the subject “Women in Buddhism” are referred to: *Women Under Primitive Buddhism* by I.B.Horner; *Women in Buddhist Literature* by B.C. Law; and a very informative article “Women and the Religious Order of the Buddha” by Jotiya Dhīrasekera, now Ven. Dhammavihāri (*The Maha Bodhi*, May-June 1967, Calcutta).

18. The first stage of realization is known as stream-entry (*sotāpatti*); the second stage is once-return (*sakadāgāmi*); the third is non-return (*anāgāmi*); the fourth and last stage is Arahantship (*arahatta*), the stage at which all fetters are severed and taints rooted out.
19. A. 4:276; Vin. 2:254.
20. The full moon and new moon days when the bhikkhus assemble to recite Pātimokkha or the Fundamental Rules.
21. The formal termination of the retreat or rainy season.
22. A form of disciplinary action.
23. A. 4:274 ff.
24. Analytical knowledge with regard to the i. meaning (*attha*), ii. texts (*dhamma*), iii. etymology (*nirutti*) and iv. the understanding of these three (*paṭibhāna*).
25. M. 146, the Ven. Nandaka's homily to the nuns.
26. Dh. 150.
27. Dh. 213.
28. See above the story of Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī, p.299
29. The Comy. says: "In the forest there was then nothing of the sort. But this the libertine said thus wishing to make her afraid."
30. Material form, feelings, perceptions, volitional formations and consciousness, in other words, the mind and body, the so called being.
31. Suffering or unsatisfactoriness, its cause, its cessation and the way leading to its cessation.
32. The Buddha speaks of three kinds of illusions (Pali *vipallāsa*, Skt. *viparyāsa*) that grip man's mind.
33. Pd. p. 174; Dh. Vol. II, p. 270.
34. Ps. p. 107.
35. *The Light of Asia*.
36. Dh. 287; Ps. p.107.
37. Ps. p. 109.
38. Dh. Vol. III, p.170.
39. The Comy. says that the Buddha gazed at her because he knew that very day the girl would die. If she did not listen to him, she would remain a mere worldlyling (*puthujjana*) so that her future state would be uncertain. But by listening to him she would attain the paths, higher mental attainments. As she was to have no escape from death that day, the merciful Master wanted to ensure that her future state would be happy.
40. Dh. 174.



41. Also known as Kundalakesi, Dhpa, Vol. II, p. 217. Parallels: AA. J.R.A.S 1893, 77-85; Kathāsaritsāgara (Tawney's trans.), ii, 493.
42. The answer is: "All beings subsist on food." For details, see *The Book of Protection*, Piyadassi Thera, Kandy: BPS, p. 25.
43. See note 24.
44. Dhpa. 102, 103.
45. Dhpa., Vol. 1, p. 325.
46. Dhpa. 43.
47. Such change of sex (of women becoming men and men becoming women) have been reported in the modern press from time to time. In the Vinaya of the Buddhist Canon we also read of them. See P.V. Bapat's paper on "Change of Sex in Buddhist Literature."
48. *Buddhist Legends*, Burlingame, Vol. ii, p. 61.
49. *Ibid.* p. 63 (with minor changes).

## Buddhist History and Culture

### The Four Sacred Shrines

While staying in the Sal Grove at Kusinārā a few hours before he attained *parinibbāna*, the Supreme Buddha, at the age of eighty, addressing the Venerable Ānanda, his most dutiful and beloved attendant, said:

“There are four places, Ānanda, which the devotee should visit with feelings of inspiration (*samvega*): the place at which he can say ‘Here the Tathāgata was born,’ ‘Here the Tathāgata attained Supreme and Perfect Enlightenment,’ ‘Here the Tathāgata set in motion the incomparable Wheel of the Dhamma,’ ‘Here the Tathāgata finally attained *Parinibbāna*, the Deathless.’ And there will come, Ānanda, to these places, pious Brethren and Sisters of the Holy Order, and devout men and women.”

#### I

Lumbini, or Rummindei, the local name by which it is now known, is the birthplace of Prince Siddhattha Gotama. Situated one hundred miles north of Benares, the full range of the snow-crowned Himalayas can be seen. Siddhattha Gotama the Buddha, the Enlightened One, is the founder of Buddhism. His father, Suddhodana Gotama, the Kshatriya (warrior clan) king, was ruling at Kapilavatthu over the land of the Sakyans on the Nepal frontier; Mahāmāyā, princess of the Koliyans, was his queen.

It was on the full moon of May (Vesākha) that Queen Mahāmāyā, travelling from Kapilavatthu to her parental home at Devadaha, brought forth a son in beautiful Lumbini Grove, under the shade of a flowering Sal tree. The discovery and identification of Lumbini Park in 1896 A.C. is attributed to that renowned archaeologist,



General Alexander Cunningham. Through his indefatigable effort and perseverance many hidden Buddhist holy spots and the sacred body relics of the two chief disciples, Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Mahā Moggallāna, were brought to light.

At Lumbini what attracts the attention of the pilgrim or the tourist most is the mighty Asoka stone pillar erected some 2,210 years ago. History records that Emperor Asoka after he became a Buddhist gave up *dig-vijaya* (conquest of the world) and established *dharmavijaya* (conquest by righteousness) and state pilgrimages. "The course of the state pilgrimages which Asoka instituted, in place of royal-hunting parties, and the holy places of Buddhism which he visited were marked by memorials in the form of imperial standards (*dhvajastambhas*), splendidly wrought in stone and inscribed with Asoka's edicts or inscriptions recording the Emperor's visit. Many of these still exist in a more or less perfect condition."<sup>1</sup>

Asoka went in procession to Lumbini with the Venerable Upagupta, his teacher and adviser. The latter pointed out the birth-place of Prince Siddhattha Gotama, saying, "Here, Great King, the Venerable One, Sakyamuni, was born." Asoka then paid homage to the holy spot and ordered a column of stone to be erected there to mark this first station of his pilgrimage. The inscription engraved on the pillar in five lines consisting of 93 Asokan characters reads:

*Devāna piyena Piyadasinā lājina visati-vasābhistitena,  
atana āgācha mahiyita hida Budhe jāte Sākyamuni ti,  
silā vigadabhi chā kalāpita silāthabhe cha usapāpīte,  
hida Bhagavaṃ jāte ti Lummini-game yubalike kate,  
atha-bhagiye cha.*

"King Devanampiya Piyadassi, when he was twenty-years-anointed, did (this place) the honour of coming (here) in person. Because the Buddha was born here, the Sakya saint, he caused a stone surrounding and screening wall to be made<sup>2</sup> and a stone pillar to be set up. Because the Blessed One was born here, he made the village Lumbini free of rent and entitled to the (king's) eighth share (of the grain)."<sup>3</sup>

## II

Buddhagayā or Bodh-Gayā, as the Indians call it, is the most sacred place to the Buddhists the world over. For it was here that the Master at the age of thirty-five attained Supreme Enlightenment.

It is recorded in the Buddhist texts that Prince Gotama at the age of twenty-nine renounced wife and child, his father and a crown that held the promise of power and glory, and in the garb of an ascetic retreated into the solitude of the forest in quest of the eternal verities of life. Accompanied by five other ascetics he practised severe asceticism on the bank of the Nerañjara at Uruvela near Gayā. Strenuously and zealously struggling for six long years, he came to death's very door. But self-mortification could not lead him to the desired goal. Abandoning asceticism and extreme fasting, he partook of food. His five companions, disappointed, forsook him. Then, unaided by any teacher, save fixed determination, unflinching energy, and complete faith in his own purity and power, accompanied by none, the Bodhisatta resolved to make his final quest in complete solitude. Cross-legged he sat under a Bodhi Tree at Uruvela, a pleasant spot, soothing to the senses and stimulating to the mind, in deep meditation practising mindfulness on in-and-out breathing (*āna + apāna sati*).

Now on a full moon day of May as the sun rose in a glowing eastern sky, and the Vesak full moon set slowly in the west, Bodhisatta Gotama solved the riddle of becoming, unravelled the mystery of being: sorrow, the cause of sorrow, the cessation of sorrow, and the path leading to the cessation of sorrow. Because of its sacred associations Gayā came to be known as Buddha Gayā, and the tree under which the Buddha sat and meditated as the Bodhi or Bo Tree, the "Tree of Wisdom."

Thus did he become one whose *samsāra*, continued existence, had finally ended. He thought thus: "My mind is free from the corruption of the craving for repeated existence. Birth is destroyed, the noble life has been perfected, done all that there was to be done, for me there is no more rebirth. Knowledge and vision arose in me. Unshakable is my deliverance, this is my last birth."<sup>4</sup>

It was here under the Bodhi Tree that the Enlightened One reflected on *paṭicca-samuppāda* (dependent arising), the central



conception of his teaching, thus: "When this exists, this is; with the arising of this cause, this effect arises; when this cause does not exist, this effect is not; with the cessation of this cause, this effect ceases."

The present Bodhi Tree is one of the successors of the original Bodhi Tree. It is well-known that Sanghamittā, the daughter of Emperor Asoka, brought with her the south branch of the original tree and planted it at Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka. There it still flourishes and is the oldest recorded known tree in the world.

According to the records of the Chinese pilgrims Fa-Hien and Hiuen Tsiang, Emperor Asoka was in the habit of visiting the Mahā Bodhi often. The story of the Bodhi Tree and Asoka's visit are represented on the sculptures of Sanchi. It is said that Asoka erected a shrine on the spot where the Master attained Enlightenment and enclosed the Bodhi Tree with a magnificent stone railing. However, no remains of Asoka's shrine have survived. "The existing temple of Bodh-Gayā can hardly be dated earlier than the first century before Christ, but there is good reason to believe that it reproduces the design of the original temple which Asoka built on the same site."<sup>5</sup>

There is a cultural link between Buddha-Gayā and Sri Lanka, for during the time of Samudragupta in India, Meghavanna, the reigning king of Sri Lanka, sent an embassy with costly presents to Samudragupta which led to the founding of a monastery at Buddha-Gayā for the residence of the monks from Sri Lanka, at the request of Meghavanna. Hiuen Tsiang writes vividly about this monastery which he visited towards the middle of the 7th century A.C.

"This was the first Sinhala Sanghārāma erected in Northern India but certainly not the first monastic foundation of Sri Lanka in India, for we learn from the Nāgarjunikoṇḍa inscription of Virapurisadatta that a spacious monastery called Sinhala-vihāra was built on the bank of the river Kṛsnā in South India at least a century earlier. The foundation of the Mahābodhi Sanghārāma still exists just outside the northern entrance of the Bodhgayā temple, defying the ravages wrought by time and in spite of the neglect of centuries."<sup>6</sup>

## III

Next we come to Isipatana, modern Sarnath, where the Master set in motion the Wheel of the Dhamma.

Barely two months had passed since his Enlightenment when the Buddha left Gayā for far away Benares, walking a distance of not less than a hundred and fifty miles to make known the truth to those five ascetics, his erstwhile companions still steeped in the unmeaning rigours of extreme asceticism.

By gradual stages the Blessed One reached the Deer Sanctuary at Isipatana and met the five ascetics, and said: "The Tathāgatha (an epithet of the Buddha, one of the meanings of which is 'One attained to Truth'), monks, is an Arahāt, an Accomplished One, a Supremely Enlightened One is He (*Sammā Sambuddha*). Give ear, monks, the Deathless has been attained. I shall instruct you. I shall teach you the doctrine. Following my teaching you will know and realize for yourselves even in this lifetime that supreme goal of purity for the sake of which clansmen retire from home to follow the homeless life."

Thereupon the five ascetics said: "Friend Gotama, even with the stern austerities, penances and self-torture you practised, you failed to attain the superhuman vision and insight. Now that you are living a life of luxury, self-indulgence and have given up the struggle, how could you have reached superhuman vision and insight?"

Then replied the Blessed One: "The Tathāgata has not ceased from effort and reverted to a life of luxury and abundance. The Tathāgata is a supremely Enlightened One. Give ear, monks, the Deathless has been attained. I shall instruct you. I shall teach you the Dhamma."

A second time the monks said the same thing to the Buddha who gave the same answer a second time. A third time did they repeat the same question. Then the Master asked: "Monks, did you ever hear me speak in this way before?" "No, indeed, Lord," was their answer. Overcome and convinced by his utterance the monks indicated their readiness to listen to him.

Now on a full moon day of July (Āsalha), at eventide, in the shady Deer Park at Isipatana in Benares, addressing the five ascetics



the Buddha said: "There are two extremes, monks, which ought not to be cultivated by the recluse. What two? Gross sensuality which is low, worldly and conducive to harm; and self-mortification which is painful, low and conducive to harm. The Middle Path, monks, discovered by the Tathāgata, avoids these extremes and gives vision, gives knowledge and Nibbāna.

"What, monks, is that Middle Path? It is this Noble Eightfold Path itself, namely: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration."

Then the Blessed One explained to them the Four Noble Truths: the noble truth of *dukkha* (suffering), the noble truth of the cause of *dukkha*, the noble truth of the cessation of *dukkha*, the noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of *dukkha*.<sup>7</sup>

Sarnath, which is situated five miles to the north of Vārānasi, marks the birthplace of the Dhamma, the Teaching of the Buddha, and the Sangha, the Taught. For it was here that the Enlightened One proclaimed the Dhamma for the first time, and sent forth his first sixty disciples.

Asoka the Great came on pilgrimage to this holy spot and caused a series of monuments and a pillar with the lion capital to be erected. The lion capital, which is given the pride of place in the excellent museum at Sarnath, is today the official crest of free India. The Asokan inscription on the pillar reads "... the Sangha cannot be torn asunder by anyone whatsoever. Whoever, monk or nun, breaks up the Sangha must be made to wear white garments and to take up abode in a place other than a monastery."

Shri Nehru writes in *Discovery of India*, "At Sarnath I would almost see the Buddha preaching his first sermon, and some of his recorded words would come like a distant echo to me through two thousand five hundred years. Asoka's pillars of stone with their inscriptions would speak to me in their magnificent language and tell me of a man who, though an emperor, was greater than any king or emperor."

Seeking for Asoka's pillars, H. G. Rawlinson writes in *India*, (p.84): "These pillars are burnished till the surface is almost like glass, and their high polish so deceived later travellers that they thought they were made of metal. They were surmounted with a bell-capital, an abacus and a symbolic figure, usually a lion. The most striking of these capitals is the one found at Sarnath, with its four magnificent lions upholding a *dharma-cakra* or Wheel of the Law, which was set in motion at this spot. The abacus is decorated with realistic figures."

John Marshall speaks with profound admiration of "the masterful strength of the crowning lions, with their swelling veins and tense muscular development," and goes so far as to declare that both bell and capital are "masterpieces in point of both style and technique—the finest carvings, indeed, that India has yet produced, and unsurpassed by anything of the kind in the ancient world."

#### IV

From Sarnath we come to Kusinara or Kusinagara as it is now called. It is in Uttar Pradesh about 120 miles north-east of Bārānasi. This being the scene of the Buddha Gotama's passing away, devout Buddhists all over the world visit this holy spot with feelings of emotion and inspiration.

The Blessed One had now reached the age of eighty. His two chief disciples, Śāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna, had passed away three months earlier. Pajāpati Gotamī, the foster-mother of the Master and head of the Order of Nuns, Yasodhara, and Rāhula were also no more.

Since it was the Rains Season, the Buddha, together with a large company of monks, left from Vesālī for Beluva to spend the *vassāna* there. From there he journeyed from Beluva to the Mahā-vana. Worn out with sickness, with feeble limbs, the Buddha now journeyed on with much difficulty followed by the Venerable Ānanda and a great company of monks. Even in this last, long, wearisome journey of his, the Master never failed in his attention to others.

The Buddha now reached his journey's end in the Sal Grove of the Mallas at Kusinārā. Speaking to the monks the Buddha instructed them on many an important point which are recorded in the



Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta or the Discourse on the Passing Away of the Buddha, the longest discourse of the Buddhist canon. All the events that occurred during the closing years of his life also are recorded in this discourse. It is indeed, a discourse that not only the devout Buddhist, but the students of Buddhism too, should read, for it is replete with important sayings and the instructive utterances of the Master.

The Buddha made his final exhortation to those who wished to follow his Teaching now and in the future in these memorable words:

*Vayadhammā sankhārā. Appamādena sampādettha.*

“Transient are all compounded things. With mindfulness work out your deliverance.”

With these last words the Master passed away. He attained *Mahāparinibbāna* that is free from any substratum of further becoming.

At Kusinārā the main objects of interest are the *Matha Kunwarka Kot*, the shrine with the recumbent image of the Master, the Mahāparinirvāna Stupa immediately behind the image house, and the Angāra Cetiya about six furlongs from the stupa, built at the spot where the remains of the Buddha were cremated. The Cetiya, of course, is in ruins but the restoration work has now commenced. When A.C. Carlyle discovered the image in 1833, it was in fragments, but he ably restored it. This colossal reclining image of the Tathāgata, 20 feet in length, lying on his right side with the head towards the north, evokes a strong sense of *samvega*—a noble inspiration and feelings of reverence in the pious pilgrim, and hardly any visitor leaves this shrine without being moved by the glance of the Buddha.

An inscription carved on the stone couch on which the image is placed, in characters of the 5th century A.C. reveals the name of the donor and sculptor.

*Deyadharmoyam mahā-vihāraswāmino Haribālasya Prati-māceyam ghatitā Dine ... Mathurena.*

“This is the religious gift of Haribāla Svāmi of the Mahā Vihāra. This image is made by Dina of Mathura.”<sup>9</sup>

The Mahāparinirvāna Stupa indicates the spot where the All-Compassionate Master breathed his last and attained Mahāparinibbāna. The identity of the place with the site of Parinirvāna was settled beyond doubt by the discovery of inscriptions referring to the Parinirvāna Caitya.

History tells us that Asoka, having paid homage to this holy spot, caused a stupa to be built, but this has not been brought to light. The Parinirvāna Caitya, to which the inscriptions refer, dates from the Gupta period and it is not impossible that the Asoka stupa lies buried underneath the later construction.

### Notes:

1. E. B. Havell, *The History of Aryan Rule in India*, p. 96.
2. Or "he caused a stone and brick wall to be made," as suggested by F. J. Fleet in JRAS, July 1908, p. 832.
3. F. J. Fleet, "The Rummindei Inscription and the Conversion of Asoka to Buddhism," JRAS, April 1908.
4. M. 26.I.167.
5. Havell, p. 112.
6. B. M. Barua, *Ceylon Lectures* (1945), p. 18.
7. Dhammacakkhappavattana Sutta, S. v, 420.
8. Vin. I. Mahāvagga, 19-20.
9. D. Valisingha, *Buddhist Shrines in India*, p. 95.



## **The Advent of Buddhism to Sri Lanka**

### **The Story of Mahā Mahinda, Sanghamittā, the Sri Mahā-Bodhi**

To the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, (Ceylon) each and every full moon day of the year has a definite significance. Of these the most holy and the most significant is the Vesak full moon because it is connected with three events in the life of the Buddha—his birth, enlightenment and his final passing away. Vesak, therefore, is a triple anniversary most sacred to the Buddhists all over the world.

However, full moon days like Poson (June) and Unduvap (December) have a special significance only to the Buddhists of Sri Lanka. The reasons are well known to them, and that is why they celebrate these two days with whole-hearted devotion.

The Unduvap full moon day is a day of sacred memories in view of its unforgettable association with an emperor's daughter, a noble woman of great self sacrifice and deep religious fervour, who came to this island and dedicated her life for the weal and happiness of the people, especially the womenfolk of Sri Lanka. She is none other than the Arahāt Therī Sanghamittā, the daughter of Emperor Asoka of India, and the sister of Arahāt Thera Mahā Mahinda who introduced Buddhism to Sri Lanka in the 3rd century B. C. on a full moon day of June (Poson).

Before we learn more about this saintly figure let us look back into the island's history and see what the religious background of this country was before the arrival of Mahā Mahinda and Sanghamittā.

### **Sri Lanka before the Arrival of Mahinda**

Although the recorded history of the Sinhala begins with the landing of Vijaya in Sri Lanka in 543 B. C., the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka starts with the arrival of the Arahāt Thera Mahinda, the

son of Asoka the Great. Nevertheless, one cannot justifiably conclude that before the coming of Mahinda Thera, the Buddha and teachings were altogether unknown to the people of this island. The Sri Lanka Chronicles, *Mahāvamsa* and *Dīpavamsa*, and the *Samantapāsādikā*, the Vinaya Commentary, give vivid descriptions of the Buddha Gotama's three visits to this island, made in the fifth month, the fifth year and the eighth year after his enlightenment.

When Mahā Mahinda arrived here in the reign of King Devānampiyatissa, 236 years after the landing of Vijaya, and expounded the Dhamma to the people, they were able to grasp quickly the message of the Master which spread throughout this island with surprising speed. This indicates that the sowing ground allotted to Mahā Mahinda had already been prepared by reason of earlier contacts with Magadha where Buddhism flourished. We know that at the request of the ministers of Prince Vijaya, the Pandyan King of Madhura sent his daughter to be the queen of Vijaya and that she was accompanied by many maidens from the Pandyan Kingdom, craftsmen and a thousand families of the eighteen guilds. Now these Pandyans were originally a Ksatriya race of the Aryans from the Madhya-desa, the scene of the Buddha's life-long ministry.

We are also told that Panduvāsudeva, the nephew and immediate successor of Vijaya, married Bhaddhakaccānā, the beautiful daughter of the Buddha's own first cousin, King Pandu. Further, as we know from the *Mahāvamsa*, the non-Buddhist Indian sects such as the Nigaṇṭhas and Paribbājakas were already in Sri Lanka. We must also infer that the contemporaries and the fellow countrymen of the Nigaṇṭhas also would have been here.

Sri Lanka being very close to the sub-continent of India, there would have been continuous intercourse between the peoples of the two countries. Also, Sri Lanka was often touched by sea-going vessels from India, and we can be sure that Buddhist traders came to this country and spoke of the Buddha and his Teachings to the inhabitants whom they met.

From the history of the Devānampiyatissa period we can gauge that the institutions which prevailed in India's middle country, Magadha, also prevailed in Sri Lanka. These facts afford abundant



evidence that the Buddha and his Teaching were known to the people of the island even before the arrival of the great saint Mahā Mahinda and his sister, Therī Sanghamittā.

The fascinating story of this brother and sister is recorded in the chronicles and in writings dealing with the life and works of King Asoka of India.

### **The Birth of Mahinda and Sangamittā**

In the year 326 B. C. Alexander the Great of Macedonia invaded the northern part of India and made Takshasilā (Taxila as the Greeks called it), a great and flourishing city, his capital. His kingdom, however, did not last long as he passed away at the age of 32 at Babylon in 323 B.C. Following the death of Alexander, Candragupta, known as Sandrocatus among the Greeks, having attacked the officers in command of the Greek garrisons left behind by Alexander, defeated King Nanda, his predecessor, and in or about 323 B.C. became the monarch of Magadha whose capital was Pātaliputra (Patna), and established the Mauryan Empire. As Vincent A. Smith notes in the *Oxford History of India*, he is the first strictly historical person who can be properly described as Emperor of India.

Candragupta was succeeded by his son, Bindusāra, whose reign came to an end in 273 B.C. Asokavardhana, popularly known as Asoka, one of the sons of Bindusāra, succeeded to the throne. During his father's reign Asoka had served as Viceroy at Taxila and Ujjain. It is said that while Asoka was proceeding to Ujjain, he tarried for a time at Vedisa, modern Besnagar, or Vessanagara mentioned in the *Visuddhimagga*, and there fell in love with Devi, a daughter of a banker named Deva, and taking her as wife with her parents' consent went with her to Ujjain. There she bore him two children. It was these two who became renowned as Mahinda and Sanghamittā, two distinguished Arahāt members of the Order. They worked with undaunted courage to establish the Buddha-Sāsana, the Dispensation of the Buddha, in this land of Sri Lanka.

When King Bindusāra was breathing his last, Asoka was summoned to Patna, and he succeeded his father as the third ruler of the Mauryan Empire. Devi, though she stayed back at Vedisa, her home

town, sent her two children to the capital to their father's court. Asoka, not satisfied with the empire left behind by his father, and being a war-like monarch like his grandfather, Candragupta Maurya, thought of extending his territories. In the eighth year of his coronation he invaded and conquered Kālinga. It was a fierce and terrible war in which 100,000 were slain, 150,000 were carried away captive, and many times this number died. When Asoka heard of the carnage wrought by his army in Kālinga, he was deeply worried. Remorse overtook him and he gave expression to his feelings in his longest Rock Edict (No. XIII).

It can be said that the Kālinga war was not only the turning point in Asoka's career, but it also became one of the decisive events in the history of the world. He realized the folly of killing and gave up warfare. He is the only military monarch on record who after victory gave up his conquest by war (*dig-vijaya*), and initiated conquest by righteousness (*dharma-vijaya*). He sheathed his sword never to un-sheath it again and no longer wished harm to living beings.

According to the Sri Lanka Chronicles it was a little Arahāt, Sāmanera Nigrodha, son of Prince Sumana, a brother of Asoka, who converted Asoka to Buddhism by a very short but highly illuminating discourse, the theme of which was mindfulness (*appamāda*). Ever after these events he who had been called Asoka the Fierce (*Chandā-soka*) was known as Asoka the Righteous (*Dhammāsoka*). He became a very generous patron of the Sangha, and a great supporter of the Buddha-Sāsana (the Buddha's dispensation). The spread of the Buddha's creed of compassion throughout the Eastern world was largely due to his enterprise and tireless effort, and Buddhism became the most profound influence that moulded the culture of Asia.

Buddhist principles and ideals coloured the thoughts and feelings of Asoka to such an extent that he became quite a different person altogether and brought about many changes in his administrative system. He endeavoured to educate the people by popularizing the teachings of the Buddha, especially the ethical aspect of it. He caused those loftly ethical teachings to be engraved on rock and they became sermons on stones, not metaphorically but actually. Asoka was imbued with that great spirit of tolerance preached by the Buddha, and during his regime all other religions enjoyed absolute freedom.



His devotion to the teachings of the Buddha was so strong that he even permitted his dear son and daughter to be ordained with their consent. At that time the son was twenty years old and received the *Upasampadā*, higher ordination, that very same day. The daughter was eighteen.

### Asoka's Missionary Zeal

Realizing the immense benefit that humanity would derive from a teaching of compassion and wisdom like that of the Buddha, Asoka made all endeavours to spread the teachings of the Buddha outside India.

The Third Great Council (*Dhammasangāyanā*) was brought to an end. The First had been held three months after the passing away of the Buddha during the reign of Ajātasattu, and the Second after a hundred years during the time of Kālāsoka. Asoka, with the advice and guidance of the Arahāt Moggaliputta Tissa, dispatched the missions to foreign lands. It is stated that each mission consisted of five Theras so that it would be possible to perform the *Upasampadā* ordination in remote districts. The archaeological discoveries made at Sanchi and Gwalior and so forth, clearly proved that these missions were actual facts.

In those distant days there were disciples of the Buddha who followed their Master's injunction: "*Go now and wander for the welfare and happiness of gods and men ... Proclaim the Dhamma, the doctrine ... Proclaim the life of purity.*" These followers were ready to undertake any mission abroad, though contact and communication in those days were most difficult and travel was full of peril. Aided by Asoka's unceasing missionary zeal and the effort, determination and courage of those early *Dharmadūtas*, Buddhism spread to many countries. Asoka's records speak of missions sent to the Hellenistic kingdoms of Asia, Africa and Europe—to Bactria and Central Asia.

According to the Chronicles, King Asoka and Devānampiya Tissa of Sri Lanka, though they had never seen each other, were great friends even before the arrival of Mahā Mahinda. It is said that the King of Sri Lanka sent envoys to his friend Dhammasoka with costly presents, and the latter gratefully sent an embassy of his chosen ministers with gifts and the following message:

“I have taken refuge in the Buddha, his Dhamma, the Doctrine, and in the Sangha, the Order. I have declared myself a lay disciple in the religion of the Sākya Son; seek then even thou, O best of men, converting thy mind with believing heart, refuge in these best of gems.”

Thus was the ground prepared for the Ven. Mahinda's mission to Sri Lanka.

Now when the Thera Mahā Mahinda was requested by his preceptor, Moggaliputta Tissa Maha Thera and the Sangha to visit Sri Lanka and establish the Sāsana there, he set out from his monastery, Asokārāma, in Patna to Vedisagiri to have a last look at his dear mother and bid farewell to her. With him also went the Arahāt Theras Ittiya, Uttiya, Sambala and Bhaddasāla, the wonderfully gifted Arahāt Samanera Sumana and the Anāgāmi lay disciple Bhanduka, a grand-nephew of Vedisa Devi.

When they came to Vedisagiri, the mother, glad at heart, welcomed her son and his companions and led them to the lovely Vedisagiri Mahāvihāra erected by herself, and ministered to them for one month.

### **Mahinda's Arrival**

By this time Tissa's father, Muṭasiva, had passed away and Devānampiya Tissa was appointed King of Sri Lanka. After spending one month at Vedisagiri, on the full-moon day of the month of Jeṭṭa, Poson full-moon, in the year 236 B. E. (i. e., 308 B. C. in the eighteenth year of Asoka's reign), Arahāt Mahā Mahinda, accompanied by those six others, rose up in the air by supernominal power and departing from Vedisagiri alighted on the silākūṭa of the Missaka Hill, the loftiest peak of present Mihintale, eight miles east of Anuradhapura, where, rising suddenly from the plain, the mountain overlooks the city of Anuradhapura.

It was a day of national festival. The king, who was enjoying the pleasure of the chase, suddenly encountered Arahāt Mahinda. He was startled by this stranger—the first sight of a monk in saffron coloured robe—but the Arahāt soon put him at ease with these words:



*Samaṇā mayam mahārāja  
Dhammarājassa sāvakā  
Taveva anukampāya  
Jambudīpā idhāgatā.*

“Monks are we, O great king,  
Disciples of the king of Truth.  
Out of compassion for you  
Hither have we come from Jambudīpa.”

The story of the arrival of the great mission from India, their meeting with Tissa, the king of the island, and how he embraced the new faith with all his forty thousand followers are graphically described in the ancient chronicles.

The Cūla Hatthipadopama Sutta (M. 27) was the discourse delivered by Mahā Mahinda to the king. This discourse gives a vivid description of the *tri-ratana*, the Triple Gem, the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha, the monastic life of an ideal monk, and emphasizes the value of discriminative examination of facts, and intelligent inquiry.

The news of the arrival of the mission and the conversion of the king and his followers was voiced abroad, and people thronged the palace gate. The enthusiastic king made all arrangements for the devotees to hear the teaching. The Venerable Mahā Mahinda's exposition of the Dhamma was so impressive that all who heard him were convinced of the Teachings of the Buddha. Before long, the message of the Master quickly spread throughout the length and breadth of this island of Lanka.

On that full-moon day of June (Poson), 236 years after the landing of Vijaya, the new religion gained official recognition on the island. Later the Venerable Mahā Mahinda and the Arahat Theras founded the Order of the Sangha, and the Sāsana was established in this country, now the world's centre of the faith. Relics of the Buddha were obtained from Emperor Asoka and they were enshrined at the Thūpārāma Dāgaba, the first of its kind to be built in the sacred city of Anuradhapura where pilgrims and devotees gather in the thousands to celebrate the festival of Poson in memory of Mahā Mahinda, the Light of Lanka (*dīpapasādaka*). Dāgabas, shrines and vihāras were built in the city of Anuradhapura and in many other holy places. The

offering of the Mahā Meghavana Park to the Sangha by the king was an important event, for it was there that the Mahāvihāra, the leading monastery and the centre of Buddhist education, was established.

In due course this seat of learning became far famed and counted among its alumni distinguished scholars from many lands, best known among them being Buddhaghosa of India, the great commentator who wrote volumes of commentaries on the Buddhist doctrine while residing at the Mahāvihāra. Also from this centre of Buddhist learning were sent *Dhammadūtas*, both men and women, to several lands in Asia to spread the teaching of the Buddha. Even today people of Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Lao, lands where Theravada Buddhism flourishes, and far away China, Korea and Taiwan acknowledge their indebtedness for the service rendered by the Lanka missions.

When Mahā Mahinda had thus planted the faith in this country and constituted the Bhikkhu Sāsana, the Order of Monks, there came the urge from the women to enter the Order of Nuns, the Bhikkhunī Sāsana. The story behind this strong desire is told in the chronicles and the Vinaya Commentary, *Samantapāsādikā*.

Mahā Mahinda, an able exponent of the clear-worded exposition of the Buddha, delivered many inspiring discourses. He instructed, enlightened and gladdened both the king and the commoner. People in large numbers sought refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha. The members of the royalty, too, were present to listen to his illuminating sermons which were all new to them, for they had not hitherto heard the word of the Buddha.

Queen Anulā, the consort of a sub-king named Mahānāga, with 500 of her attendant ladies, having listened to the discourses, gained mental attainments and implored Arahat Mahinda to grant them ordination. There was, however, no Bhikkhunī Order then in Lanka and according to Vinaya rules, Arahat Mahinda was not permitted to give ordination to women. This could be done only by a Buddha or by the members of the Bhikkhunī Order. Hence the Venerable Mahā Mahinda suggested to King Tissa that his sister Sanghamittā, who was then a bhikkhunī in India, be invited to Lanka for bestowing ordination on those desirous of it and thus establish the Bhikkhunī Order in the island.



## **The Arrival of Sanghamittā**

King Devānampiya Tissa, glad at heart, made all arrangements to dispatch a deputation headed by Ariṭṭha, one of his ministers, to Emperor Asoka intimating to him the wish of Mahā Mahinda and himself.

It is reported that when the deputation conveyed this message, Asoka was overcome by grief over losing his daughter when his son, too, had left him and the country. Asoka was not an Arahāt, a perfect one, who had eradicated all personal attachments, and it was in accord with human nature that he tried to dissuade his daughter from leaving him. Sanghamittā, however, consoled her father by explaining to him that the request had come from her noble brother and that she would have the rare opportunity and good fortune to establish the Bhikkhunī Order in Sri Lanka, and thus be of service to the Sāsana and the people of Lanka, to the womenfolk in particular.

Finally the emperor agreed, and as requested by Mahā Mahinda, suggested that she take with her a sapling of the Sri Mahā Bodhi Tree under whose shelter the Bodhisatta Gotama had gained full enlightenment. A sapling from the southern side of the tree was obtained and Asoka made all the arrangements for Sanghamittā to take it to Sri Lanka in the company of eleven Arahāt bhikkhunis. Members of the Kshatriya families, brahmins, ministers and noblemen in Asoka's court also accompanied the Bodhi. As the books mention, it was a solemn ceremony as Sanghamittā left the country from the port known as Tāmralipti (Tamluk). It is said that Emperor Asoka was at the port gazing at the departing vessel with feelings of deep emotions until it passed out of sight.

The vessel arrived at the port of Jambukola in the north of Lanka in seven days. King Devānampiya Tissa received the sapling with great honour and full of devout feelings. He caused the sapling to be deposited in a pavilion on the beach. Ceremonies were performed in its honour and on the tenth day the sapling was placed on a chariot and taken with pomp and pageantry to Anuradhapura, the capital. There it was planted with magnificent splendour and ceremony in the Mahā Megha Garden where it still flourishes and receives the veneration of millions of devotees. It is also the oldest recorded tree in the world.

Saplings from this tree were planted at various places in the island. It is interesting to note that some have been planted in foreign lands, too.

In this connection it must be borne in mind that whatever reverence or homage a devotee pays while under the shadow of a Bodhi Tree is paid not to an inanimate tree, but to what the tree represents, namely the supreme Buddha who attained enlightenment under a Bodhi Tree. The tree symbolizes in a vivid way the enlightenment.

The tree is known in Pali as *assattha*, the sacred fig tree, *ficus religiosa*. Since enlightenment took place under this particular tree, it became popularly known as *Bodhi* (in Sinhala *Bo*), which means enlightenment. Bodhi Tree, therefore, literally means "Tree of Enlightenment" or "Tree of Wisdom."

The Buddha himself refers to the tree at Gayā: "I, now, monks, am an Accomplished One (*Arahant*), a Supremely Enlightened One (*Sammā-Sambuddho*). I attained supreme enlightenment under the fig tree (*assatthassa mūle abhisambuddho*)." (Mahāpadana Sutta, Digha Nikāya).

The truth of the story of the Venerable Arahāt Mahinda's mission to Sri Lanka is confirmed by a fresco at Ajanta. The story of the mission of Arahāt Therī Sanghamittā who brought the branch of the Bodhi Tree, is confirmed by bas-relief at Sanchi, India.

### The Sri Mahā Bodhi

The advent of Buddhism to Sri Lanka, and the planting of the south sapling of the Sri Mahā Bodhi Tree at Anuradhapura, are the most sacred moments in Sinhala history, and the accounts of them excite deep feeling.

Writers on Sri Lanka and historians (most of them foreigners) never forgot to mention these events, and their accounts of them are so lively and fascinating that they are not out of place here:

Dr. Paul E. Peiris (of Sri Lanka) writes: "It is doubtful if any other single incident in the long history of their race has seized upon the imagination of the Sinhalese with such tenacity as this of the planting of the aged tree.



"Like its pliant roots, which find sustenance on the face of the bare rock and cleave their way through the stoutest fabric, the influence of what it represents has penetrated into the innermost being of the people till the tree itself has become almost human, and even now on the stillest night, its heart-shaped leaves on their slender stalks ceaselessly quiver and sigh, as they have quivered and sighed for twenty-three centuries."

H. G. Wells observes: "In Ceylon there grows to this day a tree, the oldest historical tree in the world, which we know certainly to have been planted as a cutting from the Bo Tree in the year 245 B. C. From that time to this it has been carefully tended and watered. Its great branches are supported by pillars ... It helps us to realize the shortness of all human history to see so many generations spanned by the endurance of one single tree" (*The Outline of History*, Cassell, 1934, p. 392).

Fa Hien, the Chinese monk and traveller, who visited Lanka in the fifth century A.C. and spent two years at the Mahā Vihāra at Anuradhapura, saw the tree in vigorous health and makes mention of it in his records.

Referring to Asoka's mission, Dr. Rhys Davids writes:

"Its central incident is the transplanting to Ceylon of a branch of the tree at Bodh Gaya under which the Buddha had achieved enlightenment."

"Now this event is portrayed on two curious bas-reliefs on the Eastern Gateway at Sanchi, which must be nearly as old as the event itself. In the middle of the lower picture is the Bodhi Tree, as it stood at Gaya, with Asoka's chapel rising half-way up the tree. A procession with musicians is on both sides of it. To the right a royal person, perhaps Asoka, is getting down from his horse by the aid of a dwarf. In the upper picture there is a small Bodhi Tree in a pot, and again a great procession, to the left, a city, perhaps Anuradhapura, perhaps Tamralipti, to which the young tree was taken before it went to Ceylon. The decorations on either side of the lower base-relief are peacocks, symbolical of Asoka's family, the Moriyas (the peacocks), and lions, symbolical of the royal family of (that is, of Sinhala, the lion island) ...

Saplings from this tree were planted at various places in the island. It is interesting to note that some have been planted in foreign lands, too.

In this connection it must be borne in mind that whatever reverence or homage a devotee pays while under the shadow of a Bodhi Tree is paid not to an inanimate tree, but to what the tree represents, namely the supreme Buddha who attained enlightenment under a Bodhi Tree. The tree symbolizes in a vivid way the enlightenment.

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"It was a great event, an impressive state ceremony, and a fitting climax to that one of the missionary effort of Asoka's reign which was most pregnant of results" (*Buddhist India*, 1950, Indian Edition, p. 198).

It is also interesting to note what Emerson Tennent has to say with regard to the historicity of this tree:

"Compared with it, the Oak of Ellersile is but a sapling; and the Conqueror's Oak in Windsor Forest barely numbers half its years.

"The Yew-trees of Fountain Abbey are believed to have flourished there twelve hundred years ago; the olives in the Garden of Gethsamane were full grown when the Saracens were expelled from Jerusalem, and the Cypress of Soma in Lombardy is said to have been a tree in the time of Julius Caesar; yet the Bo-tree is older than the oldest of these by a century, and would seem to verify the prophecy pronounced when it was planted that it would flourish and be green for ever."

Further says Tennent: "Though ages varying from one to five thousand years have been assigned to the baobabs of Senegal, the eucalyptus of Tasmania, the dragon tree of Orotava, the Wellingtonia of California, and the chestnut of Mount Etna, all these estimates are matters of conjecture, and such calculations, however, ingenious, must be purely inferential.

"Whereas the age of the Bo-tree is a matter of record, its conservancy has been an object of solicitude to successive dynasties, and the story of its vicissitudes has been preserved in a series of continuous chronicles amongst the most authentic that have been handed down by mankind" (*Ceylon*).

Sanghamittā made the Upāsikā-vihāra, a nunnery within the city, her abode. When the planting of the Bodhi sapling and the ceremonies connected with it were all over, Anulā and her women were ordained, and the Bhikkunī Order was set up under the able guidance and leadership of the Arahāt Therī Sanghamittā. The Bhikkhunī Order thus established flourished in this country for several centuries. History tells us that Sinhala bhikkhunīs even sailed to far away China and established the Bhikkhunī Order in that country during the time of Yuan Chia (429 A.C.).



Sanghamittā gave ordination not only to Princess Anulā and members of the royalty and higher strata of society, but to all, irrespective of their standing in society. Women from all walks of life joined the Order. Following in the footsteps of the Buddha who treated women with consideration and civility, and pointed out to them, too, the path to peace, purity and sanctity, Sanghamittā did all in her power to raise womankind from lower to higher levels of life. She worked with unflagging devotion and undaunted courage for the moral, intellectual and spiritual uplift of the women of Sri Lanka.

Buddhism makes no distinction of sex with regard to doctrinal matters. All follow the same doctrine and discipline set forth by the Buddha. All, irrespective of sex, caste or colour, can reach the highest attainments found in Buddhism provided they follow the path pointed out by the Master, namely the Noble Eightfold Path, which is Buddhism in practice.

### **The Death of Mahinda and Sanghamittā**

By her saintly character and virtue, her compassion and conscientiousness and service for the religion, Sanghamittā Therī endeared herself to the people of this country. Like her brother, Mahā Mahinda, she stands a vivid and notable figure. In the annals of history there never was an instance of a brother and sister dedicating themselves to the task of a spiritual ministration abroad with so deep a devotion and such far-reaching results as Mahā Mahinda and Sanghamittā.

Both Mahā Mahinda and Sanghamittā survived Devānampiyatissa, who reigned for forty years. The Venerable Mahā Mahinda, the *Dīpappasādana*, he who made the island bright — the Light of Lanka — who dedicated his whole life to the weal and happiness of the people of this fair isle, passed away in the eighth year of the reign of Uttiya, younger brother and successor of Devānampiyatissa, at the age of eighty, while he was spending the rainy season (*vassāna*) on the Cetiya Mountain. King Uttiya carried out the obsequies with great honour and solemnity. A number of stupas were built over the relics which remained after the cremation of the body. One of them was built at Mihintale where Mahā Mahinda spent most of his time.

The passing away of the Venerable Therī Sanghamittā took place in the following year, at the age of seventy-nine, while she dwelt in the peaceful Hatthālhaka nunnery. Her funeral, too, was performed by Uttiya with honour and proper solemnity at a spot not far from the Bodhi Tree. A monument in her honour was built there.

These great Arahats are no more. But they still speak to us through the work they did. Their good names will remain ever green in our memory. The people of Sri Lanka are ever grateful to these great beings, and even today thousands of pilgrims ascend a staircase of 1840 steps hewn out of rock to reach the holy spot, Mihintale, where the great brother and sister lived propagating the Dhamma and setting an example, by their own religious lives, to the people of this country.



## Ordination in Theravada Buddhism

The followers of the Buddha are fourfold: monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen (*bhikkhu*, *bhikkhunī*, *upasaka*, *upasikā*). The Theravāda Bhikkhunī Sāsana has ceased to exist; however, there are Buddhist nuns. Today, therefore, we are left with the Bhikkhu Order with Buddhist Nuns and the male and female laity.

To know the origin of the Bhikkhu Order we have to go back twenty-five centuries when at the Deer Park, at Isipatana (modern Sarnath), near Benares in India, the Buddha Gotama on a full moon day of July, addressed the five ascetics, his former friends, and revealed to them the right path, the Noble Eightfold Path, which leads to calm, realization, enlightenment and Nibbāna. This is known as setting in motion the matchless Wheel of Truth (*Dhamma-cakka*).

The five ascetics were convinced and became followers of the Buddha. With the proclamation of the Dhamma for the first time, and with the conversion of the five ascetics, the Deer Park became the birthplace of the Buddha's Dispensation (Buddha Sāsana) and of the Sangha, the community of monks, the ordained disciples.

Before long fifty-five others headed by Yasa, a young man of wealth, joined the Order of the Sangha. Now there were sixty disciples altogether. Their novice ordination and higher ordination were granted by the Buddha in these words: "*Come, monks, well-proclaimed is the Dhamma. Live the noble life (brahmacariyaṃ) for the complete ending of suffering (dukkha).*" When the *vassa*, the rainy season of three months (July-October) ended, the Master sent forth his sixty disciples, the Accomplished Ones (*Arahats*) advising them to proclaim the *Dhamma*, the peace-breathing message of the Buddha.

In accordance with this admonition, the disciples walked throughout India, spreading the Dhamma, the new message of wisdom and

compassion. Men and women from different walks of life who listened to the message of the Master manifested their willingness to follow the Buddha and his teaching. Among them there were those who wished to enter the Order of the Sangha. The monks brought these followers to the Master for ordination from various districts. The long journeys, however, fatigued both the monks and the seekers for ordination. To avoid this hardship and inconvenience, the Buddha allowed the monks to ordain the followers in any district. The manner of ordination was explained to the monks by the Buddha himself:

"The hair and beard must be shaved first, and then the saffron robe put on. Adjusting his robe on one shoulder (the left), the seeker for ordination should pay homage to the monks, and squatting (if this is inconvenient one can kneel) before them with hands raised and palms together, he should say:

*Buddhaṃ saranam gacchāmi*  
*Dhammaṃ saranam gacchāmi*  
*Sanghaṃ saranam gacchāmi*

*Dutiyampi Buddhaṃ saranam gacchāmi*  
*Dutiyampi Dhammaṃ saranam gacchāmi*  
*Dutiyampi Sanghaṃ saranam gacchāmi*

*Tatiyampi Buddhaṃ saranam gacchāmi*  
*Tatiyampi Dhammaṃ saranam gacchāmi*  
*Tatiyampi Sanghaṃ saranam gacchāmi*

I go for refuge to the Buddha (the Teacher),  
 I go for refuge to the Dhamma (the Teaching),  
 I go for refuge to the Sangha (the Taught).

For the second time I go for refuge to the Buddha,  
 For the second time I go for refuge to the Dhamma,  
 For the second time I go for refuge to the Sangha.

For the third time I go for refuge to the Buddha,  
 For the third time I go for refuge to the Dhamma,  
 For the third time I go for refuge to the Sangha."

This was the manner in which a follower gained ordination in those early days. But with the passage of time this short formula had



to be expanded as various unsuitable and undesirable men sought admission into the Order. As it stands now, in the Novice Ordination (*Pabbajjā*) the follower has to recite the ten precepts in addition to the three refuges. In the case of a Higher Ordination, (*Upasampadā*) the novice who is to be ordained is examined and questioned by senior monks. It may be noted that these additions were made by the Buddha himself, and they are not later, arbitrary inclusions. Hence in the conducting of a novice (*sāmaṇera*) or bhikkhu ordination every detail has to be observed.

In the Order of the Sangha a novice is expected to observe the ten precepts, study the doctrine and discipline (*Dhamma-Vinaya*) from his elders, attend upon the senior monks, prepare himself and become eligible for the Higher Ordination. *Sāmaṇera* (*samaṇa* + *nera*) literally means son (*nera*) of the *samaṇa* or the monk, in the sense that a novice should be taught, disciplined and taken care of by a competent and understanding monk. A novice need not observe the *vassa*, the rainy season, which a bhikkhu is expected to observe. He is given bhikkhu or Higher Ordination when he has reached the age of twenty and not before. But age alone would not do, for it is not a sufficient qualification; if he lacks in intelligence, has not studied the necessary Dhamma and Vinaya for leading the bhikkhu life, he is not a fit candidate eligible for the Higher Ordination.

A bhikkhu is expected to observe the essential *Pāṭimokkha* precepts which are 220 (227) in number. It is difficult to adequately translate the word bhikkhu. "Monk" may be considered as the best rendering. The words, *Thera* and *Mahā Thera* are only titles. A bhikkhu who has counted ten or more years of *vassa* may be called a *Thera* (literally elder or senior), and a bhikkhu who has spent twenty or more years of *vassa* is eligible to be called a *Mahā Thera*. Still he is a bhikkhu, and as the Dhammapada (260, 261) says:

"One is not a Thera merely because his head is grey.  
Ripe is he in age. 'Grown old in vain' is he called."

"In whom there is truth and righteousness,  
Harmlessness, restraint and control,  
That wise man who has thrown off impurities,  
Is, indeed, called a Thera."

The word "priest" cannot, however, be used as a substitute for bhikkhu; for Buddhist monks are not priests who perform rites or sacrifices. They do not administer sacraments and pronounce absolution. An ideal Buddhist monk cannot, and does not, stand as an intermediary between man and "supernatural" powers; for Buddhism teaches that each individual is solely responsible for his own liberation. Hence there is no need to win the favour of a mediating priest. "You yourselves should strive on; the Buddhas show the path" (Dhp. v. 276).

The purpose of "going forth" (*pabbajjā*) is to turn away from thoughts of sensuality (*kilesa-kāma*) and objects of sense (*vatthu-kāma*). It is, therefore, really a self-sacrifice, and the urge to do so should be a genuine one if it is to bear pleasant fruit. This is certainly not a course that all can follow; for to leave behind the world's attractive and pleasurable life is no easy task. It may not be possible for all to cut themselves off from the world and all it holds. And the Buddha does not expect all his followers to become monks or ascetics. Again the Dhammapada (v. 302) says:

"Hard it is to go forth  
From home to homelessness,  
To take delight in it is hard."

In the Buddha's Dispensation, full liberty is granted to the disciples to leave the Order if they find it difficult to live the monk's life any more. There is no coercion or compulsion whatsoever, and the person reverting to the lay life is not stigmatized.

Genuine renunciation, it may be borne in mind, is not escapism. Those who do not understand the real significance of renunciation, and those who judge it by bogus "recluses" who lead an indolent, worthless and parasitical life, hastily conclude that "going forth" is a sort of escapism, a selfish way of life. Nothing could be more untrue. The ideal monk, the bhikkhu, is an altruist of the highest type who takes least from, and gives much, to society. "As a bee, without harming the flower, its colour and fragrance, takes away the honey (pollen) even so should the sage move in the village" (Dhp. v. 49).

Some in the Western world feel that renunciation is a kind of escapism. It is not correct to say that a Buddhist monk runs away from



society. He really gets more involved in the world; for before he gave up his lay life, he belonged to a small circle—his parents, family members and kith and kin. When he does renounce the things of this world, he quits that narrow circle of the home and becomes one who belongs to the whole world. There is involvement and there is also detachment. He is in the world but not of the world. To him the whole world is one family and he treats all alike. He breaks the barriers that keep people apart in this society.

It is true that with the passage of time many changes have taken place, yet the genuine Buddhist monk who has given up worldly pleasures endeavours to lead a life of voluntary poverty and complete celibacy with the high aim of serving others selflessly within the bounds of a bhikkhu's life, and of attaining deliverance of mind.

There are two ways of leading the life of a bhikkhu: one entails continuous meditation (*vipassanā-dhura*) and the other part-time meditation, studying and teaching the Dhamma (*gantha-dhura*). It is obligatory for every bhikkhu to take up one or other of these ways according to temperament, age and environment.<sup>1</sup>

The robe that a novice or a bhikkhu puts on is his dress and he is expected to wear it always and not on special occasions only.

In conclusion, it must be said that the Higher Ordination or *Upasampadā* ordination should be conducted in a duly consecrated "Chapter House" (*sīmā*) and not in any place considered convenient.

#### Notes:

1. For a detailed account of the bhikkhu life the reader is referred to this writer's *The Buddha's Ancient Path* (Kandy: BPS), Chapter 8.

## Buddhist Observances and Practice

### Standpoint

Buddhism is a system of moral, mental and intellectual training proclaimed and laid down by Gotama the Buddha. It involves neither an exclusively intellectual or rationalistic way of life, nor a way wholly devoted to ritualistic observances, but embraces both the intellectual and emotional aspect of man's life—his head and heart.

Looked at from this point of view, Buddhism is not, as some hasty critics would conclude, a mere philosophical speculation, a doctrine of metaphysical, and logical abstractions bereft of practical value or importance. The Buddhist way of life, the Buddhist method of grasping the highest truth, awakening from ignorance to full knowledge, does not depend on mere academic knowledge or purely intellectual development but on a doctrine which has its practical counterpart, and it is this happy combination of theory and practice that leads the follower to enlightenment and final deliverance.

The Buddha's attitude towards life is not merely intellectual but practical. It is a realization of that which is good and beneficial. It makes for ethical perfection as well as mental emancipation. This implies a cultivation of good emotions and an abandonment of the bad. The emotional aspect, too, should be developed though that alone does not lead us to the final goal. Good emotions should always be blended with right understanding, since conduct and wisdom are complementary.<sup>1</sup>

Rituals, the observance of set forms or rites, have a place in almost all religions. While these rituals are needed for the emotional side, one has to be careful not to overdo these observances, for then one tends to become obsessed with emotions. There is the risk of becoming a victim of maudlin sentimentalism. One should not go to



extremes in anything but should follow the middle path so well extolled by the Buddha.

The Buddha was an embodiment of compassion and wisdom (*karunā* and *paññā*), which became the two guiding principles in his dispensation (*sāsana*). Through personal experience he understood the supremacy of man, and attributed all his attainments and achievements to human effort and intelligence.

### The Buddha Image

In Buddhism there is what is called *Buddhavandanā* or reverencing the Buddha. The Buddha, however, is not in existence to receive the homage of others. Then why pay reverence and obeisance to one who is not in existence? Why do Buddhists go before a Buddha image, a Bodhi Tree, a stupa or pagoda or some such object, worship them and pray? one may ask.

Well, here there is no praying to, or worshipping of, inanimate objects. Before the image the Buddhists are only recalling to mind the greatness of their guide and teacher whom the image represents. The highest worship is that paid to the best of men, those great and daring spirits who have, with their wide and penetrating grasp of reality, wiped out ignorance and rooted out defilements from their minds. The men who saw truth are true helpers, but Buddhists do not pray to them. They only reverence in gratitude and admiration the revealers of truth for having pointed out the path to true happiness and deliverance.

In this act of reverence it is the devotee who gains and benefits. His thoughts, speech and deeds become pure when he thinks of the virtues of the Buddha and concentrates on them. He gains inspiration and moral support to emulate the Master. It is a helpful meditation.

We honour our departed ones. Why do people lay wreaths at a war memorial? Why do they give pride of place on the walls of their homes to pictures of their dear departed parents and other beloved ones? Do they respect the picture or the frame? Certainly not. Their honour and homage is in the name of the dead one. So when a Buddhist approaches a Buddha image which is an object of meditation, and thinks of the teacher in respectful admiration, are we justified in calling that act of reverence useless idolatry?

It must, however, be mentioned that in the case of developed individuals symbolic worship is hardly necessary. They can visualise the greatness of the Buddha without the aid of a symbol which is really necessary and even vital in the case of those who are not advanced in mental development.

However, it is not only the emotional type but even high intellectuals and great thinkers who have gained inspiration from a Buddha image.

Jawaharlal Nehru in his autobiography writes:

"At Anuradhapura (in Ceylon), I liked greatly an old seated statue of the Buddha. A year later, when I was in Dehra Dun Gaol, a friend in Ceylon sent me a picture of this statue, and I kept it on my little table in my cell. It became a precious companion for me, and the strong calm features of the Buddha's statue soothed and gave me strength and helped me to overcome many a period of depression.

Buddha has always had a great appeal for me ... It is the personality that has drawn me."<sup>2</sup>

Count Kayserling in *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher* writes: "I know nothing more grand in this world than the figure of the Buddha. It is the perfect embodiment of spirituality in the visible domain."

### Offering of Flowers

It is a common sight in Buddhist lands to see the devotees, both young and old, and even the very babes offering flowers before an image or some such sacred object, lighting an oil lamp or burning incense in the name of the Buddha. Children take delight in gathering flowers and arranging them in order before they offer them in the name of the Buddha. While learning to appreciate the aesthetic aspect of things, they also learn to be generous, to let go, and above all to respect the Buddha the Teacher, the Dhamma, the Teaching, the Sangha, the Taught.

Now when a Buddhist offers flowers, or lights a lamp, and ponders over the supreme qualities of the Buddha, he is not praying to anyone; these are not rites, rituals or acts of worship. The flowers



that soon fade, and the flames that die down speak to him of the impermanency (*anicca*) of all conditioned things. The image serves him as an object for concentration, for meditation; he gains inspiration and endeavours to emulate the qualities of the Master. Those who do not understand the significance of this simple offering hastily conclude: this is idol worship. Nothing could be more untrue.

### Buddhist Marriage Ceremonies

There are no marriage ceremonies in Buddhism as we find in other religions. Buddhist monks are not priests who solemnize marriages. That being so, they do not take part in marriage ceremonies. In Sri Lanka, those who attach importance to traditional customs often invite a layman, generally an elderly relative well versed in ceremony, to perform the marriage ceremony by reciting devotional verses to evoke the blessings of the Triple Gem, the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, on the couple to be married.

At some wedding ceremonies a bevy of girls dressed in their national white costume recite together benedictive verses in Pali, known as the *Jayamangala Gāthā*, which describe some of the outstanding virtues of the Buddha.

Often a few days before the actual marriage ceremony, monks are invited to the homes of the bride and the bridegroom for a *dāna* or mid-day meal. After the offerings the monks will recite the suttas, discourses of the Buddha, especially the Mangala Sutta, a discourse on the blessings, and one of them will deliver a short sermon by way of exhortation, citing examples of happily married lives recorded in the Buddhist texts. Most popular among these examples is the married life of Nakulapitā and Nakulamātā recounted below.

Some Buddhists prefer to visit a temple or monastery immediately after their wedding ceremony to obtain the blessings of the Buddhist monks who recite the *parittas* or discourses of protection. The couple also receives a short exhortation dealing with the reciprocal duties of the husband and wife as explained by the Buddha in the Sigāla Sutta.<sup>3</sup>

The monks perform all their religious duties with no charge. The laity in turn see to the needs of the monks, who really depend on the

devout laity for their bare necessities, the fourfold requisites: robes, food, dwelling place and medicine.

Neither wedding ceremonies nor registering of marriages are performed in the Buddhist vihāras, temples or monasteries, for they are secular activities.

### The Story of Nakulapitā and Nakulamātā

Two striking incidents mentioned in the text show how far absolute good faith and pure love between married couples can go.

Nakulapitā and Nakulamātā are a genial couple who lived during the time of the Buddha Gotama. When the Master visited their home, they approached him respectfully, and then Nakulapitā, the husband, said: "Lord, I was quite young when I brought home Nakulamātā who was a mere girl. Ever since we were married, Lord, I am not aware of having transgressed against her even in thought, much less in person (deed). Lord, we do wish earnestly to behold each other not only in this very life but also in the life to come."

Then Nakulamātā, the wife, spoke in just the same strain. Thereupon said the Buddha: "If both wife and husband wish to behold each other both in this very life and the life to come, if both are matched in faith (*saddhā*), in virtue (*sīla*), in generosity (*cāga*) and in wisdom (*paññā*), then do they behold each other in this very life and in the life to come."<sup>4</sup>

The other incident also is recorded in the Anguttara Nikāya.<sup>5</sup> Once Nakulapitā was grievously ill. Then his wife, Nakulamātā, came to his bedside, spoke to him tenderly, and made him understand her many virtues, and that he should not entertain any thoughts of anxiety, worry or doubts on her account. She advised him not to undermine his health by such disturbing thoughts.

When Nakulapitā was thus counselled and consoled by his loving Nakulamātā, his sickness subsided. Thus saved by her willing hands and loving heart, Nakulapitā, leaning on a staff, visited the Buddha and saluted him. Thereupon the Blessed One, while praising the virtues of Nakulamātā, said: "Good man, you have greatly gained in having had as your guide and teacher such a wife as Nakulamātā who is so full of compassion towards you and so well-wishing."



It is said that the couple attained sanctity (the paths) together, and that these two were placed by the Buddha as chief of those that win confidence.

## Buddhist Funeral Rites

Among the Buddhists, the funeral rites, as in the case of marriage ceremonies, are simple and not elaborate. When a Buddhist passes away, the close relatives will invite the monks to the house of the departed one or to the cemetery to perform the rites. The congregation will first recite the Three Refuges (*tisarāṇa*) and the Five Precepts (*pañca sīla*). Next, the close relatives (in the case of a parent, the children, if any) will offer white cloths to the monks. Merit thus accrued is shared with the departed one thus:

*Idaṃ me ñātīnaṃ hotu  
Sukhitā hontu ñātayo*

“Let this (merit) accrue to my departed relatives.  
May they be well and happy!”

While reciting the Pali verse they will pour water from a jug into an empty cup till it overflows, an act symbolic of the passing of merit to the departed. The monks will then recite together a special verse in Pali suitable for the occasion:

*Aniccā vata saṃkhārā—uppāda vaya dhammino  
Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti—tesaṃ vupasamo sukho.*

“Impermanent are all component things,  
They arise and cease, that is their nature;  
They come into being and pass away,  
Release from them is bliss supreme.”

This is followed by a short sermon emphasizing the impermanency of all conditioned things—how death comes to all, and puts an end to this brief span of life.

On the sixth day after the death, a monk is invited to the house of the deceased after dusk to deliver a sermon. It is customary for the preacher to speak mainly on impermanency and suffering (*anicca* and *dukkha*), the twin realities of existence, and the nature of this drama of life and death. Relatives and friends attend this sermon.

On the seventh day following the death several monks are invited for the *dāna*, the mid-day meal, and the merit thereby accrued is shared with the departed one. Most of these performances are repeated at the end of the third month also.

In a non-Buddhist country, in the absence of monks, the laity themselves can together recite the two verses and share merit with the departed one.

## **I. On Occasions of Death**

There is knowledge which is helpful to facilitate the comfortable birth of a man, but there is no science which helps man to pass out of this existence with the least discomfort. Buddhism, which stresses the importance of thought, regards the last thought of the dying man as most important in that it helps to condition the nature of his next existence. On several occasions the Buddha, realizing that a man was about to die, spoke such appropriate meaningful words as would help the dying man to get into the correct frame of mind.

Even the very sight of a Buddha, or in the absence of the Buddhas and Arahats, even a Buddhist monk, or a saint, at times, is a balm to the dying person. The Dhammapada Commentary<sup>6</sup> records the following story:

At Sāvatti there lived a miserly Brahmin whose only son was known by the name of Maṭṭhakundali. When the boy was sixteen years of age he suddenly fell ill. His mother was eager to consult a doctor; the mean-hearted father, however, would not send for one lest he might lose his wealth. When the boy was tottering on the verge of death, a physician was called in. But he left the place knowing that the illness was beyond remedy.

The father, who had no doubts about his son's imminent death, pondered: "When my son dies, all my friends and relatives will throng to see him, and they will cast eyes on the wealth in my household and consequently I shall fall into difficulty." So he carried the dying child and laid him down on the open terrace.

Knowing the sad plight of Maṭṭhakundali, the Buddha visited him. The dying child caught a fading glimpse of the Master, radiant and sparkling with boundless love.



It was a spectacle of grandeur which he had never witnessed before. In his rapture he wished to raise his hands in salutation to the Compassionate One. But this he could not do, for his limbs were benumbed with feebleness. Then with a heart and mind suffused with awe and reverence he gazed upon the Master thus saluting him mentally. The Buddha commented: "He has done enough," and retraced his steps to Jetavana Monastery. As the Blessed One departed, the boy died and was reborn in a celestial deva realm, in a good state of existence.

One of the blessings resulting from the practice of *mettā* or loving-kindness is that a man never dies with a confused mind (*assammūlho kālaṃ karoti*).<sup>7</sup> In view of this importance of the last thought of man, the Buddhist practice has arisen of reciting the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta,<sup>8</sup> the well-known Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness, by the bedside of the dying man. This would help the dying man to entertain a wholesome thought before he breathes his last. Even if he does not understand the import of the words, being a Buddhist, who with *saddhā* or confidence has listened over and over again to the melodious recitation of Pali *gāthā*, he will in every probability be induced to enter into a wholesome state of mind by the mere enjoyment of that melody. Whosoever helps a dying man to enter into the correct frame of mind therefore is rightfully regarded as his best friend (*kalyāṇa mitta*).

## II. Burial and Cremation

What is the Buddhist practice regarding the disposal of a dead body? Is it a burial or cremation?

In the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta<sup>9</sup> (the Discourse on the Passing Away of the Buddha) the Venerable Ānanda, the personal attendant of the Buddha, asks this same question: "How are we to deal, Lord, with the remains of the Tathāgata, the Perfect One?" The Buddha's answer was that the body should be cremated as in the case of a Cakkavatti Rājā, a universal monarch.

Apart from this statement of the Buddha, no mention is made in the text about the disposal of a dead body. There is no uniform practice. Some prefer to cremate and others to bury the bodily remains

of a person. However, in the present era with the growing scarcity of available land space, and the rapid increase of population to alarming proportions, cremation is preferable to burial. From a hygienic point of view, too, a cremation is preferable.

Regarding the disposal of the ashes left from the cremation, here, too, there is no uniform practice. The ashes may be kept in an urn or enshrined in a monument erected to the memory of the deceased if that is the wish of the dead person or the survivors.

There has been a practice of erecting stupas enshrining the ashes of the departed Buddha and the Arahats. The sight of such stupas can induce a sense of calm by helping one to recall the unblemished lives of these saints. The Buddha himself has mentioned this in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta.

### The Value of Paritta (*Pirit*)

"Recent research in medicine, in experimental psychology and what is still called parapsychology has thrown some light on the nature of mind and its position in the world. During the last forty years the conviction has steadily grown among medical men that very many causes of disease, organic as well as functional, are directly caused by mental states. The body becomes ill because the mind controlling it either secretly wants to make it ill, or else because it is in such a state of agitation that it cannot prevent the body from sickening. Whatever its physical nature, resistance to disease is unquestionably correlated with the psychological condition of the patient."<sup>10</sup>

"Mind not only makes sick, it also cures. An optimistic patient has more chance of getting well than a patient who is worried and unhappy. The recorded instances of faith healing include cases in which even organic diseases were cured almost instantaneously."<sup>11</sup>

In this connection it is interesting to observe the prevalence in Buddhist lands, of listening to the recital of the Dhamma for protection and deliverance from evil, and for promoting welfare and well-being. The selected discourses for recital are known as *paritta suttas*. *Paritta* in Pali (*paritrana* in Sanskrit and *pirit* in Sinhala) means principally "protection." It is used to describe certain suttas or discourses (spoken by the Buddha) that are regarded as affording



protection and deliverance from harmful influences. The practice of reciting and listening to the *paritta suttas* began very early in the history of Buddhism. It is certain that their recital produces mental well-being in those who listen to them with intelligence and are confident in the truth of the Buddha's words. Such mental well-being can help those who are ill to recover, and it can also help to induce the mental attitude that brings happiness. Originally in India those who listened to *paritta* sayings of the Buddha understood what was recited and the effect on them was correspondingly great. The Buddha himself had *pirit* recited for him, and he also requested others to recite *pirit* for his own disciples when they were ill. This practice is still in vogue in Buddhist lands.

The Buddha and the Arahats can concentrate on the *paritta suttas* without the aid of another. However, when they are ill, it is easier for them to listen to what others recite, and thus focus their minds on the Dhamma that the sutta contains than think of the Dhamma themselves. There are occasions, as in the case of illness which weakens the mind, when hetero-suggestion has been found to be more effective than auto-suggestion.

According to the Dhamma, the mind is so closely linked with the body that mental states affect the body's health and well-being. Some doctors even say that there is no such thing as a purely physical disease. Therefore, unless these bad mental states are caused by previous evil acts (*akusala kamma-vipāka*), and so are unalterable, it is possible so to change them that mental health and physical well-being will follow.

The vibratory sounds produced by *paritta* are soothing to the nerves and produce a state of peace of mind and bring harmony to the system.

How can bad influences springing from evil beings be counteracted by the recitation of *paritta suttas*? Well, they are the result of evil thinking. Therefore, they can be destroyed by the good states of mind caused by listening intelligently and confidently to *paritta* sayings, because of the power of concentration that comes into being through attending whole-heartedly to the truth of the sayings.

*Paritta sutta* recital is a form of *saccakiriya*, of depending on the truth for protection, justification or attainment. This means complete establishment in the power of truth to gain one's end. The saying: "The power of truth protects a follower of the truth" (*Dhammo have rakkhati dhammacāriṃ*) is the principle behind these *sutta* recitals. If it is true that virtue protects the virtuous, then a person who listens to these sayings with complete confidence in the Buddha's words, which spring from complete enlightenment, will acquire so virtuous a state of mind that he will conquer any evil influence.

The recital of *paritta suttas* also results in material blessings through the mental states caused by concentration and confidence in listening intelligently to the recital. According to the Buddha, right effort is a necessary factor in overcoming suffering (*viriyena dukkhaṃ accheti*).<sup>12</sup> Listening to one of these recitals in the proper way can also generate energy for the purpose of doing good, and following the path of wordly progress with diligence.

It is understood that listening to these *paritta suttas* must produce in the intelligent and confident listener only wholesome states which can cure and prevent illness. There is no better medicine than truth (Dhamma) for both mental and physical ills which are the cause of all suffering and misfortune. So the recital of *paritta suttas* may, when they are listened to rightly, bring into being mental progress, physical welfare and well-being.

### The Book of Paritta (Protection)

It is both interesting and refreshing to note that there is hardly a Buddhist home in Sri Lanka where the Book of Paritta or Book of Protection is not found. It is given an important place in the Buddhist home. It is even treated with veneration.

Now what does this book contain? It is a collection of twenty-three *suttas* or discourses almost all delivered by the Buddha and found scattered in the five collections, *Nikāyas*, which form the *Sutta Piṭaka* or the "Basket of Discourses." These *suttas* found in the Book of Paritta are preceded by an enunciation of the Three Refuges (*saraṇagamana*); the Ten Precepts (*dasa sikkhāpadāni*); and the questions asked of a novice (*sāmaṇera pañhā*) also known as the young



one's questions (*kumāra pañhā*). The most popular among these twenty-three suttas are the Good Omen Discourse (Mangala Sutta), the Jewel Discourse (Ratana Sutta), and the Loving-kindness or Universal Love Discourse (Mettā Sutta).

Among the discourses of the Paritta Book are also included such important suttas as the Dhammacakkapavattana, Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Truth (the first sermon of the Buddha delivered at the Deer Park at Isipatana, Vārānasi); Sacca-vibhanga, the Analysis of the (Four) Truths, and the Bojjhngas, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment.

It is customary for monks when they are invited to the homes of the laity on occasions of domestic importance such as birthdays, house-warmings, illness and similar events to recite from the Book of Paritta the popular suttas mentioned above. On special occasions monks are invited to recite the *paritta suttas* not for short periods but right through the night. At the commencement of this recital, the monks (generally about twelve) who have been invited will recite the three popular suttas mentioned above. Thereafter a pair of monks will commence reciting the remaining suttas for two hours. They will then retire and will be followed by another pair for another two hours. In this manner the recital will last till dawn.

While the recital lasts there will be found a vessel or jar of water placed on a table before the monks. On this table there is also the Book of Paritta written on ola leaves, and also a ball of thread which is unloosened and passed on to the monks and the laity who hold the thread while the recital of the three popular suttas goes on. At the close of the recital of the entire book at dawn, the thread is broken into portions and distributed among the laity. The water is also distributed among them. These are meant as symbols of the protective power of the *paritta* that was recited. They have their psychological effects.

A question may arise whether recitals from the Book of Paritta will in every case result in the protection sought for. In this connection the same reply given by the Venerable Nagasena to King Milinda, why the recital of *paritta* does not in all cases protect one from death, is worth remembering. Due to three causes *paritta* may have no effect: kammic hindrances (*kammāvaranena*); hindrances from defilements (*kilesāvaranena*); a lack of faith (*asaddhānatāya*).<sup>13</sup>

## Transference of Merit

Life after death (and therefore life before birth) is one of the principal tenets of the Buddha. Buddhists believe in rebirth or to be precise—in rebecoming (not reincarnation for this implies a soul which enters into another human or animal body). Following the injunction of the Buddha his followers offer merit to their departed ones. This is known as offering or “the transference of merit.”

In Buddhism the word “merit” (*puñña*) is used to mean good or wholesome actions; harmless deeds done with a pure heart; action done with a good volition or will. Actions (*kamma*) are three-fold: mental, verbal and physical. All actions, good or evil, have their reactions (*kamma-vipāka*).

Transference is made by the doer of the good deed resolving that “so and so” may partake of the “merit” of his good deed. The “transference of merit” is itself a good deed and the transferer loses nothing thereby, but adds to his store of merit. When transferring merit to the dead, the Buddhist recites a short formula in Pali: *idaṃ vo ñātīnāni hotu sukhitā hontu ñātayo* “Let this merit accrue to relatives, may they have happiness.”

During the time of the Buddha, in India, all manner of blood sacrifices were made to gods that they might rejoice seeing them. The Buddha took an uncompromising attitude towards the killing of animals for whatever purpose. His all-embracing love toward all beings triumphed over Vedic and Upanishadic philosophy with the result that King Seniya Bimbisara of Magadha was the first convert to unreserved *ahimsā* (non-violence). He passed a law prohibiting animal sacrifice in his kingdom. Other rulers followed suit. The Sutta Piṭaka, the Collection of Discourses, contains several suttas attributed to the Buddha in which he convinced brahmins of the error of their ways and made them give up animal sacrifices altogether. The Kūṭadanta Sutta (Digha Nikāya, 5), is one of them.

The custom that has come down to us of pouring water from one vessel to another till the latter overflows in the act of transferring merit to the dead is not found anywhere in the sacred texts. However, this custom need not be condemned for that matter. This is a practice that



has acquired some sanctity through long usage. The Buddha permitted any social custom that did not go counter to his teaching. Water was poured over the Buddha's hand at the dedication of the Jetavana (Jeta Grove) Monastery. A young maiden given in marriage to a young man is united with the latter by pouring water over their joined hands. The transference of merit is a precious act in which the donor is activated by the pure motive of rehabilitating a dead relative from a state of woe into a state of happiness. It should, therefore, be performed with all solemnity as befits the occasion. However, the non-performance of this age-long custom vitiates not the act of transferring merit.

In Buddhist countries after the almsgiving to the Sangha, members of the Order, is over, the Sangha in unison repeats the final transference of merit to the departed ones thus:

"Just as water that falls on an elevated spot flows down to lower levels, even so may this merit given (by friends and relations) of this human plane be shared by the departed ones (*petas*).

"Just as the waters of great rivers go to fill up the ocean, even so may this merit be shared by the *petas*" (*Tirokudda Sutta, Khuddakapāṭha*, p.213.)

Is there a prescribed time to transfer merit to the departed relations and friends? The Buddha's teaching has not made a prescribed time. However, Buddhists have obtained from somewhere a schedule of time, namely: on the third day, on the seventh day, on the third month and sometimes annually reckoned from the day the relation breathed his last conscious moment on this planet. By all means follow the tradition and also keep in mind the tea propaganda motto: "Every time is tea time." That is to say: any time you make an offering, remember the departed ones at the beginning of the meritorious act.

After performing any meritorious and wholesome actions the Buddhists share the merits thus acquired by them, with the deities or celestial beings (*devatā*) also. Because they too wish to share the merits given by human beings. The deities, however, are not permanent supernatural beings with supernatural powers. They are born in a good state of existence (*sugati*) and can help human beings in their

own way. Their powers are mundane and limited and cannot lead others to enlightenment and final deliverance of mind. They are also subject to the law of *kamma*, impermanence and death—death that cannot be outrun by any runner, human or divine. Human beings share merits with the deities and the deities are happy and there is harmony, goodwill and peace among them.

### Notes:

1. D. 4, 124.
2. *Nehru, An Autobiography*, (John Lane, The Bodley Head, London, 1942), p. 271.
3. D. 31. See *Everyman's Ethics*, (Kandy: BPS) Wheel 14.
4. A. ii, 61.
5. A. iii, 295.
6. *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, Vol. I. p. 25.
7. *Mettānisaṁsa Sutta*, A. v, 342.
8. M. 10; D. 22; See *The Foundations of Mindfulness*, trans. by Nyanasatta (Kandy: BPS) Wheel 19.
9. D. 16; See *Last Days of the Buddha*, *Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta* (Kandy: BPS) Wheel 67/69.
10. For the physical basis of resistance, see J. E. R. Mc. Donagh, *The Nature of Disease*.
11. Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1946), pp. 258–259.
12. S. i, 214.
13. Miln., I. 154.



## Buddhism in the Western World

Under this title the author has attempted to give the reader a brief survey of the origin and march of Buddhism in the West. It is by no means a comprehensive review of Buddhism in the Western world.

The Buddha lived in India in the 6th century before Christ. This was an age of intense intellectual and social activity in many parts of the world: a time of religious unrest, a time of experimentation, of bold investigation and high achievement in the realm of man's thought. The appearance of religious teachers and sages in the East and West during this period was almost contemporaneous. It was the golden era or the peak period in the history of religions. History had witnessed radical changes in social and religious conditions in Greece and Rome. During this century, while Heraclitus was teaching the "*Panta Rhei*" doctrine or the flux theory at Athens, Pythagoras was conducting his famous school.

In China there was Lao Tsu where his teachings, later known as Taoism or "The Way of Nature," inspired some of China's finest minds. Confucious, who appeared in the middle of the 6th century, established an ethical system based on the ancient customs and traditions of China, and his teachings became known as Confucianism (550-479 B.C.). In Persia, modern Iran, there was Zarathustra or Zoroaster as the Greeks termed him. Purity of thought, speech and deed constitute the pivotal doctrine of Zarathustra. In India, in the beginning of the 6th century, Mahāvīra, better known in the Pali canon of the Buddhists as Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, was the exponent of Jainism which enjoins strict asceticism and *ahimsā* or boundless compassion, and proclaims the karma doctrine and the transmigration of souls.

The Buddha Gotama was a contemporary of Jaina Mahāvīra. He walked the highways and byways of India instructing, enlightening, and gladdening the many, and his teaching is now known as

Buddhism. The Buddha himself called his teachings *Dhamma-vinaya*, the Doctrine and the Discipline.

### **Spread of Buddhism**

Any account of Buddhism and its spread must inevitably cover vast expanses both of time and space. It is the story of a movement which had very small beginnings. With only a few followers at the beginning, it grew gradually to encompass the world, influencing the destinies of over six-hundred million, almost one fourth of the whole human race. In time it covered more than 2,500 years. Buddhism made such rapid strides chiefly due to its intrinsic worth and its appeal to the reasoning mind; but there are other factors that aided its progress. Never did the *Dhammadūtas*, the messengers of the Dhamma, use any iniquitous methods of spreading the doctrine. Buddhism penetrated to other countries peaceably without disturbing the creeds that were already there. Buddhist missions were carried on neither by force of arms nor by the use of any coercive or reprehensible methods. Conversion by compulsion was unknown and repugnant to the Buddha and his disciples.

Rev. Joseph Wain remarks: "Buddhism taught a life not by rule, but by principle, a life of beauty, and as a consequence, it was a religion of tolerance. It was the most charitable system under the sun. Never and nowhere had blood been shed for its propagation. It has never persecuted or maltreated those whose beliefs were different—a lesson that Christianity has yet to learn. The Buddha taught man to beautify the today and to sanctify the now."

Buddhism, which had its origin in the valley of the Ganges, was propagated first by the Buddha himself and his Arahāt disciples. During the first 200 years of its history Buddhism was confined, more or less, to the northern part of the Indian peninsula. Then came Asoka, unique among rulers of the world, who accepted the teachings of the Buddha, and endeavoured to educate the people of the world by spreading that teaching, especially its ethical aspects. He caused such ethical teachings to be engraved on rock, and they became sermons on stones, not metaphorically but actually. Asoka was imbued with that great spirit of tolerance preached by the Buddha, and under his reign all other religions enjoyed absolute freedom without let or hindrance.



Buddhist culture is never void of religious tolerance and understanding.

Realizing the immense benefit that humanity would derive from a teaching of compassion and wisdom like that of the Buddha, Asoka made all endeavours to spread the teachings of the Buddha outside India. There were disciples of the Buddha who followed their Master's injunction: "Go now and wander for the welfare and happiness of gods and men, and proclaim the life or purity." These monks were ready to undertake any mission abroad, though contact and communication in those days was most difficult and travel was full of peril. Aided by Asoka's unceasing missionary zeal and the effort, and the determination and courage of the *Dhammadūtas*, Buddhism spread to other countries. Asoka's record speaks of missions sent to the Hellenistic kingdoms of Asia, Africa and Europe—to Syria and Egypt; Cyrene, Macedonia and Epirus, to Bactria and through central Asia to China.

### Asoka the Great

It was during Asoka's time, 236 years after the passing away of the Buddha, that his own son Mahinda, the Arahāt sage, introduced Buddhism to Sri Lanka where it flourishes even today, almost in its pristine purity after the vicissitudes of over twenty centuries. From Sri Lanka Buddhism spread to Burma and Siam, modern Thailand, and thence to Indo-China, and Annam. It was established in Tibet, spread to Nepal, Mongolia, and gained a firm foothold in China. Thence it penetrated to Korea, and was transmitted to Japan through the sea-route. It also spread to Java and flourished in Sumatra during the Sri Vijaya dynasty. Thus Buddhism expanded beyond the boundaries of India and became a world religion.

There is ample evidence to show that the teaching of the Buddha has been something like a leaven to the mental life of humankind from the Siberian snowlands to the verdant sunny isles of the Indian sea, and from the Land of the Rising Sun to fog-bound Britain. It is not improbable that Buddhism penetrated even to the old South American civilizations in the early centuries of our era (*Buddha and Buddhism*, Arthur Lillie pp. 205-208). Further, it should be remembered that the two most ancient living civilizations, the Indian and the Chinese, and three of the greatest of the religions of today, Christianity, Islam, and

Hinduism have been altered and improved by the infiltration of the Buddhist ideal. In the light of these facts one can well imagine how colossal must be the Buddhist contribution to human culture. (*The Contribution of Buddhism to World Culture*, Soma Thera, BPS, Wheel 44.)

The history of Buddhism cannot be separated from the history of Eastern culture and Eastern society. Of all the influences that moulded the culture of Asia, Buddhism was the most profound. For more than 2,500 years Buddhist principles and ideals have coloured the thoughts and feelings of the people of the East.

The spiritual tie which Eastern Asiatic nations feel with India could never have been forged but for this powerful and momentous movement that was started at holy Sarnath some twenty-five centuries ago. "The Sangha was a great republic. It was in fact the ruling voice—supreme controlling power." The power was not the property of any single person but of the body taken together. From its inception the Buddhist Sangha has been a model democratic institution, and to the Buddhists, democracy owes its parliamentary procedure (see p.424).

Referring to the Order of monks which the Buddha established, Manmatha Nath Sastri of India says: "The Buddha created a new race of men, a race of moral heroes, of salvation workers, a race of Buddhas. The Holy Order stood before man as a lighthouse which guided the mariners to lead their ships to the port of salvation."

Buddhism was able to diffuse itself through a great variety of cultures throughout the world. If Indian culture has spread over a large part of Asia and in parts of Indonesia, the credit must be undoubtedly given to Buddhism; for the Buddhist spiritual missions always took in their train the highest culture of India. Thus the greatness of the empires of Sumatra under the Sailendras, and in China under the Tang Dynasty was dependent to a large extent on the arts and crafts, philosophy and culture introduced by the Buddhists from India. It was through Buddhism that China and India came near to each other and developed many contacts.

The missions of King Asoka, the pattern for all good rulers of humanity, are among the greatest civilizing influences in the world's history. The mission of Mahā Mahinda Thera, the son of Asoka the



Great, was primarily a spiritual movement, and if we rate the civilization of the people of Sri Lanka as very high in the scale of human culture, it is largely because of the influence of Buddhism and things concomitant with the practice of it.

The Sangha plays a most important part in the survival of the Buddha Sāsana (the Dispensation of the Buddha). Both the clergy and the laity are necessary for the world. The Buddha never despised one in order to rank himself with the other. Hence it is really important that there should be a correlation between the laity and the clergy for the survival of the Sāsana. On account of this beautiful correlation Buddhism did persist in Sri Lanka in its pristine purity during the reign of the ancient Buddhist kings.

And then there is the record of the monks and nuns of the Buddhist Sangha who travelled to distant lands braving all dangers for the purpose of spreading the peace-giving message of the Buddha, and who died far from their homelands, happy in the consciousness that they had done their bit. Their lives and endeavours were pure and perfect. Theirs was one of the best contributions to the world's culture. Even the thought of those wonderful servants of the world can rouse in us the resolve to do as they did: to live, think and work "for the gain of the many, for the weal and happiness of the many, in compassion for the world."

### Age of Science and Technology

Today we are living in an age of science and technology when communication and contact have produced startling results. *Dhamma-dūtas* can now go to the remotest corners of the globe where they can instruct, enlighten and gladden the young and the old who are in search of a new way of life. The cry in this age is for a rational teaching.

The path of the *Dhammadutas*, however, is not as smooth as some are inclined to think. It is not a jaunt or a mere holiday excursion. When a Buddhist monk, draped in a saffron coloured robe, with shaven head and downcast eyes, walks along the streets of a large city like Rio de Janeiro in South America, it is a startling sight which can well elicit uncomplimentary remarks from passers by. There is also the added unpleasantness of climatic difference which a Buddhist monk coming from a tropical country has to experience.

The *Dhammadūta*'s path through difficult countries can be a tortuous one, twisting and turning through cultural patterns foreign to him. Nevertheless, a *Dhammadūta* who is bent on his noble task of spreading the sublime Dhamma, the love and wisdom of the Enlightened Ones, is ready to face all difficulties and tribulations with a brave and courageous heart, and he goes his way undaunted with this one aim kept foremost in his mind. He is not keen on forcing his views on the minds of those whom he comes in contact. His main purpose is to make himself a vehicle for the dissemination of the teaching of the Enlightened Ones, and thereby foster religious harmony.

The relationship between Buddhism and the Western world goes back to a period before the Christian era. It can safely be said that the relationship between Buddhism and the Western world existed even before the birth of Jesus. History tells us of an invasion of India by Alexander the Great of Macedonia in the 4th century before Christ. Although the empire he founded soon faded away, and by 317 B.C. even traces of Greek rule had vanished, it was an event that certainly brought about a closer connection between the two countries, and that eternal separation between East-West that Rudyard Kipling sang of had virtually disappeared. And there is no doubt that Indian culture together with Buddhist thought were transmitted to Greece by those Greek intellectuals who visited India from time to time and that Alexander himself, inspired by Buddhist thought, helped spread the teachings of the Buddha. As already mentioned, Asoka's missions entered some of the territories of Greece with the message of the Buddha. Modern discoveries have proved that Asokan edicts were written not only in an Indian language in Brahmi characters, but in Greek and Aramaic, the language which Jesus spoke, indicating that the Greeks and Semitic races were interested in the words of the Buddha which were engraved on stones by Asoka.

The Europeans, however, had glimpses of Buddhism when travellers, and especially Christian missionaries, sailed to the East from the 16th century. Of course, from these missionaries who went to the East to teach and "civilize" the Asians and remove paganism from them, we cannot expect unbiased and authentic representations but distorted and misinterpreted versions of the clear-worded expositions of the Buddha. This is abundantly clear from the writings on



Buddhism by the missionaries of the past. The general impression created was that Buddhism was a primitive religion of idol worship. Even today the errors are not remedied but followed to the very letter by some modern missionaries. It must, however, be mentioned that some Christian missionaries made valuable contributions to the knowledge of Buddhism in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

### **World Religions**

A religion becomes known as a world religion when it has expanded beyond the country of its origin. Today we have five world religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. Religion, it must be said, is one of the few things that distinguishes a human being from all other beings. This is distinctively a human phenomenon and therefore should be treated by human means, from a human point of view with human feeling.

The term religion can be explained in diverse ways. Each creed will have its own interpretation and definition. The English word "religion" has a specific meaning attached to it. It seems to me that it is futile to attempt a definition of religions. The field of religions, however, is very wide indeed. Religion now has a fully organized system of feeling, thought and institution, ceremony and ecclesiastical organization and similar practices. At the beginning, however, there were no such organizations as we see today. No religion was organized, except perhaps, in the case of Islam which is only 1,375 years old, and the youngest of the world religions. With the passage of time, however, religion became institutional and organized. Today some of the religions of the world are not merely faiths that speak of man's salvation and the hereafter only, but have become whole civilizations with their institutions: social, educational, economic and even political.

Whatever religions are accepted and followed by Westerners are derived from Asia. It is interesting to note that all the living religions had their origin in Asia: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism in India; Taoism and Confucianism in China; Zoroastrianism in Iran; Judaism and Christianity in Israel, and Islam in Arabia.

At times, Westerners, though perhaps not the serious thinkers among them, make bold to say that a religion like Buddhism, or even

Hinduism and Islam, which have their own historical and cultural background, belong to another cultural pattern different from theirs, and therefore are not suitable to the Westerner with quite a different background and outlook. But we know that Buddhism and Hinduism arose among Indo-European people of North India over 2,500 years ago, while Christianity, the predominant religion of the West, came from the Semitic tradition of the Middle East where Judaism and Islam too, had their origin. Consequently it is difficult to understand in what respect Semitic culture is similar or nearer to that of the West than Indian culture itself.

It is right to say that where religion is concerned, the Asians and the Europeans, including the Americans whose origin is in Europe, had common beginnings. Nevertheless, when Christianity penetrated to Western Europe and America through the Roman Empire, it underwent many changes. The waves of materialism and Western civilization pressed hard on Christianity, and the Church, by gradual process, had to reform the Christian religion to suit the Western outlook.

Religions have to undergo certain changes in accordance with the ancient traditions, customs and outlook of a people, their historical backgrounds and climatic and geographical conditions, but that does not mean that the fundamentals of a religion should be sacrificed.

### **Buddhism Penetrates to Europe**

The earliest knowledge of Buddhism came to England, Germany, and other countries of Europe through Buddhist books and not through Buddhist missions. Books were the missionaries.

The earnest study of Buddhism, and its gradual spread in the West really began in the early 19th century. A few eminent scholars studied Buddhism and Indian thought and wrote learned books on the history and doctrine of Buddhism in several European languages. These publications, notably those of the French Orientalist Eugene Burnouf, and of George Turner, a civil servant in Sri Lanka who in 1837 published in Roman characters his edition of the *Mahavamsa* (the Great Chronicle of Ceylon) with a translation, were pioneer European studies of Pali, and resulted in a slow but steady increase in Western study of Buddhism and Buddhist culture.



It must be said that England's contribution to the spread of Buddhism and Oriental studies is very great. Special mention should be made of the savant T.W. Rhys Davids (1843-1922). He came to Sri Lanka in 1864 and while living there for eight years as a civil servant became interested in Pali and Buddhism; and with the guidance and instruction of the learned Sinhala monks, he studied both. On his return to England in 1872, he engaged himself in his Oriental studies and worked with such eminent scholars as Victor Fausboll, Hermann Oldenburg and Robert Childers. Childers, like his friend Rhys Davids, also came to Sri Lanka in 1864, and worked as a civil servant. The publication in two volumes of his *Dictionary of the Pali Language* (1872-1875), comprehensive for the times, and a work still worth consulting, was his great contribution to the study of Pali.

In 1881 Rhys Davids was invited to give the Hibbert lectures in America. The memory of Rhys Davids is cherished by Buddhists and those interested in Pali studies the world over because of his great contribution to the oriental studies in the West. His greatest contribution was the foundation of the Pali Text Society in 1881. This was an attempt to critically edit and print in Roman characters the Buddhist texts and the commentaries and translate them into English. His avowed object was to "render accessible to students the rich stores of the earliest Buddhist literature now lying unedited and practically unused in the various manuscripts scattered throughout the universities and other public libraries in Europe." He himself edited several of the Pali texts and translated some of them. He held the chair of Pali and Buddhist Literature at London University, and was responsible for founding the London School of Oriental Studies.

In this connection mention also should be made of Mrs. Caroline A. Foley Rhys Davids, a woman of remarkable intelligence who not only assisted her husband in his literary work, but herself edited and translated a number of Pali books or manuscripts and interpreted their contents according to her convictions, which at times, were unfortunately not quite in harmony with the Buddhist tradition. Had it not been for the Pali Text Society, Theravada Buddhism would have been not so widely known, particularly in the Western world. The Society has edited in Pali, in Roman characters, all the works in the Tripitaka, the Buddhist Canon, and many Commentaries. These translations

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have gone into several editions, and now these books have found a place in most of the university libraries in Europe, America, and in the Orient. In addition to these we now have the *Pali-English Dictionary*, the Magnum Opus of Professor Rhys Davids and his collaborator Dr. W. Stede, *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, by Dr. G. P. Malalasekara, and *Pali Tripitaka Concordance*. The Danish Academy's new *Oriental Pali Dictionary*, though it will take years to complete, will be outstanding as a work of lexicography. This dictionary was initiated by the Danish Pali scholar of deep learning, V. Tenckner, assisted by the Swedish Pali scholar, Helmer Smith.

Max Muller, who produced his voluminous *Sacred Books of the East*, a series of translations from a variety of Eastern languages into English contributed by different scholars, encouraged Rhys Davids to begin the *Sacred Books of the Buddhists* on the closure of the *Sacred Books of the East*. This series is yet continuing. These scholars, and several others, whose names are not mentioned here, devoted themselves unsparingly to the study and spread of Pali and Buddhism. The work done by the Pali Text Society during the last 106 years, with the assistance of eminent scholars in the field of Pali studies, is colossal. This great work was successfully continued by its President, Dr. (Miss) I.B. Horner, a devoted and energetic scholar of international reputation.

It must also be said that extensive Buddhist academic studies have been done in several European countries, Germany and France in particular, and that scholars are continuing with unswerving determination their work in the field of Pali and Buddhist studies.

When we speak of Buddhism in Germany we must give credit to the Germans themselves for introducing Buddhism to Germany from Buddhist lands. As in the case of Britain, it was in the early 19th century that Germany became aware of the more reliable version of Buddhism through publications by German, French and English Indologists. The *Dhammapada*, a book of the Buddhist Canon, consisting of 26 chapters and 423 verses, the best known Buddhist text, was translated with notes and excerpts from the Commentary, from Pali into Latin by the eminent Danish scholar Fausball in 1855. This was the first transliteration of a Pali text to be published in full in



Europe in the Roman characters with which the Europeans, for the first time, became acquainted.

In the earlier days Germans were stimulated to study Buddhism owing to the works of the renowned philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, whose thoughts were influenced to a great extent by the teachings of the Buddha. Though his voluminous work *World as Will and Idea* is tinged with a note of pessimism which is contrary to the spirit of Buddhism, which teaches neither pessimism nor optimism, but the realistic view of life and the world. Schopenhauer's philosophy influenced all people with inquiring minds. He kindled the minds of not only the Germans, but the people of Europe in general, by his writings which declared that Buddhism is the key to all the problems of life.

The first German translation of the *Dhammapada* by the noted Indologist Albert Weber appeared in 1860, and it was the first rendering of it into a modern Western language. In the field of translating the Pali scriptures into German, the work of Karl Eugen Neumann, Oldenburg and the Ven. Nyanatiloka Mahāthera are outstanding. Among those who worked for the cause of Buddhism in Germany, names of the following are unforgettable: Paul Dahlke, a German physician who visited Sri Lanka eight times and studied Pali Buddhism, was a good practising Buddhist whose knowledge of the Theravada was remarkable. Most of his books available in English translated by Bhikkhu Silacara, have influenced the study of Buddhism among the English speaking people.

Paul Dahlke not only wrote books on Buddhism and translated Buddhist texts, and published several Buddhist journals, but after his return from the East he founded a Buddhist House (Buddhistisches Haus) in 1924 in Frohnau, Berlin, on a beautifully situated plot of land acres in extent. It was this land that the German Dharmaduta Society of Colombo purchased in 1957, and which presently houses the Sri Lanka Mission.

The Ven. Nyanatiloka lived the life of a Buddhist monk in Ceylon for over 50 years and passed away in Sri Lanka at the age of 79. He was the first ordained bhikkhu of German origin, and also the first from Continental Europe. He not only wrote numerous books

both in German and English but also founded in 1911 the Island Hermitage on a lake at Dodanduwa in South Sri Lanka. This hermitage has been the training centre for the last seventy years for many Europeans who sought ordination for the study and practice of Buddhism under the leadership and guidance of the Ven. Nyanatiloka. Even today there reside in this hermitage Europeans, mostly German and American monks.

Mention must be made of the Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera, the distinguished pupil of the Ven. Nyanatiloka. Following in his teacher's footsteps, the Ven. Nyanaponika ably continued the work of his predecessors by contributing outstanding translations in both German and English. In his endeavour to spread Buddhism, he, with the late Mr. Richard Abeysekara founded the Buddhist Publication Society (BPS). Begun in 1958, it is now the largest publisher of Dhamma works in the world. The *Seven Factors of Enlightenment* by this writer is the first booklet of the Publication Society. Up-to-date the BPS has issued 360 of the "Wheel Series" which are distributed world-wide.

Oldenburg, Max Muller, Wilhelm Geiger, Kurt Schmidt, George Grimm, Kurt Seidenstuecker, Paul Dhalke, Von Glassenapp, Wald Schmidt and Winternitz are some of the tireless workers who translated Buddhist works into German and wrote books on Buddhism stimulating many to study the Buddha's teaching.

The interest in Buddhism kindled by such savants as the French Orientalist Eugene Burnouf, the German philosopher Schopenhauer and the English Orientalist Rhys Davids, spread throughout Europe and America, and as a result, the study of Buddhism and Buddhist scholarship was continued by a learned body of Indologists and Orientalists.

The French tradition established by Burnouf and Sylvan Levi, is continued by such eminent scholars as Paul Demieville, Louis Renou and others. Sylvan Levi's pupil, the Belgian Indologist Louis de La Valle Poussin, and his pupil, Etienne Lamotte and Dutch scholars like K. Kern, J.W. De Jong and G. Tucci of Italy and in Russia, scholars like Vaailieff, Minayeff and Stecherbatsky and several others have been greatly instrumental in promoting the study of Buddhology and Oriental thought.



In the United States of America in the late 19th century, the Harvard Oriental Series was founded by Charles Rockwell Lanman and his pupil Henry Clarke Warren in order to interest the West in the ancient wisdom of the East, and to bring about mutual understanding between the two spheres. In this series several Buddhist books have been translated from the Pali into English. Warren's *Buddhism in Translation* in 1896, Eugene Watson Burlingame's *Buddhist Legends*, which is an English translation of the Pali *Dhammapada Commentary*, in 1921, and the *Sutta-Nipata* translation of Lord Chalmers are outstanding contributions.

In his effort to present Buddhism to the Western reader, Warren included in his work the life of the Buddha, his teaching and his Monastic Order, all taken directly from the original Buddhist texts thus making it authentic. This work still enjoys a wide circulation in America, Europe and in the Orient, and nearly half of the work is included in the Harvard Classics. Commenting on the man and his work, Lanman says:

"The timeliness of the Harvard Oriental Series as a whole is an eloquent tribute to the discernment of my loved and unforgotten pupil and friend, Henry Clarke Warren. In him were united not only the will and the ability to establish such publications, but also the learning and insight which enabled him to forecast in a general way its possibilities of usefulness. We knew that the East had many a lesson to teach the West; but whether the lesson be repose of spirit or hygiene of the soldier in the field; whether it is the divine immanence or simplicity of life or the overcoming of evil with good, he knew that the first lesson to be taught us was that teachable habit of mind. If the judgment be right, if these purposes have been measurably attained—then Warren is worthy to be remembered not only as a scholar, but also as a man of patriotic and practical public service."

Mention should also be made of the late Professor Edgerton of Yale University who made a valuable contribution to Sanskrit Buddhist studies through his *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary, Reader and Grammar*, published in 1953, and Dwight Goddard, an American Buddhist who wrote *A Buddhist Bible*.

Even before the introduction of Buddhism to the United States, Colonel Henry Steele Olcott, an American who had fought on the federal side in America's civil war, came to Sri Lanka with his friend and colleague, Madame Helena P. Blavatsky in the year 1880. Both of them embraced Buddhist philosophy. On a wall of Vijayānanda Vihāra, Weliswatta, Galle, on the south coast of the island, Colonel Olcott wrote: "This is to certify that on the 19th May 1880 the founders of the Theosophical Society, Madame H.P. Blavatsky and myself took the Panchasila for the first time at Vijayananda Vihara from Akmīmana Dhammārāma Thera. S. Olcott."

They then established the Theosophical Society, and worked for the revival of the Buddhist religion and Buddhist culture and education, which were fast disappearing after centuries of foreign domination. Olcott's services are too well known to be repeated here. (See BPS Wheel No. 281, *Colonel Olcott, His Service to Buddhism.*)

It could be said with confidence that the introduction of Buddhism to the United States occurred at the World's Parliament of Religions held in the City of Chicago in 1893 at which the late Anagārika Dharmapāla, a Sri Lankan, and a close collaborator of Colonel Olcott, represented Buddhism. C.T.S. Strauss of New York, who later wrote books on Buddhism, was probably the first American to accept Buddhism. He received the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts from Anagārika Dharmapāla. During this time, it is said that a Japanese Buddhist Mission, for the first time, arrived in San Francisco, and commenced Buddhist activities there.

### **Anagārika's Service for the Sāsana**

In December 1890 when Anagārika visited Buddha Gayā where Gotama the Buddha had attained supreme enlightenment, he found the holy place utterly neglected and deserted. Under the Bodhi Tree there, he made a religious pledge, a vow to save Buddhagayā and win it back for the Buddhists from the non-Buddhist Mahant who occupied the sacred area. After a long and weary struggle Anagārika was able to win back Buddhagayā legally for the Buddhists.

On May 31, 1891, he established the Mahā Bodhi Society which was first called "Buddhagayā Mahā Bodhi Society." The first issue of



the Buddhist magazine *Maha Bodhi* came to light under his editorship on Vesak, the full-moon day of May in 1892.

Anagārika Dharmapāla's address to the World's Parliament of Religions was well received. The acceptance of his speech made a strong impression on the members who heard him. After his triumph in Chicago he went to Honolulu where he met Madame Mary Foster on October 17, 1893. This generous and enthusiastic Buddhist was a tremendous asset to Anagārika in the dissemination of the Dhamma.

On July 13, 1931, Anagārika Dharmapāla entered the Buddhist Order under the clerical name Devamitta and aged 70 passed away on April 29, 1933 at Samath, Bāranasi, India, where the Buddha had delivered his first sermon and set in motion the Wheel of the Truth. His last words were: "Let me be born again twenty-five times to spread the Buddha's teaching."

The first Buddhist mission to England came on April 23, 1908, led by none other than the Ven. Ānanda Metteyya, an English monk formerly known as Allan Bennet, who received his ordination as a bhikkhu in Burma and devoted his life for the cause of Buddhism. It was Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* that attracted Allen Bennet to Buddhism at the age of 18.

The Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland was founded on November 26, 1907 to assist the Buddhist Mission. This society, which functioned until 1923, was replaced in 1924 by the present Buddhist Society of which the late Mr. Christmas Humphreys was the President from its very inception.

In England, Ven. Ānanda Metteyya was assisted by a body of scholars and enthusiastic supporters such as Dr. and Mrs. Rhys Davids, Sir Edwin Arnold and Dr. E. R. Rost to mention a few. The Ven. Ānanda Metteyya, in his saffron robe, graceful and dignified, made a great impression on the people who came to him to discuss Buddhism, and those who had already had some idea of the new religion through books, became Buddhists. Francis Payne, who later worked hard for the cause of Buddhism in England, with his wife and children were the first to be admitted to the fold of Buddhism.

A careful survey of the history of Buddhism in the West reveals that Buddhism has been in the hands of a few scholars who were

dealing with this "living religion" from a purely academic standpoint. Conditions have now changed and Buddhism seems to have taken a new turn. As more Buddhist literature has become available in the West, and as Buddhist missions from time to time have, in a modest way, acquainted the people of the West with the teachings of the Buddha, Europeans and Americans have come to understand that Buddhism is not only a mere doctrinal system, but a way of life, an inexhaustible storehouse of knowledge, the religious foundation for a civilization of international importance. We must not, however, forget the fact that this new turn is largely due to the selfless labours of the scholars of the last hundred years.

### **Buddhist Publication Society**

Many changes have taken place in the West in the near past. There is a growing interest in Buddhism, both Theravada and Mahayana. Scores of Buddhist societies, centers and groups and several vihāras have been founded. Books of all types and sizes on different aspects of Buddhism, authoritative or otherwise, and many Buddhist journals and periodicals have appeared in the thousands.

Buddhist literature now, as in the past, has been a great asset to the spread of Buddhism in the Western world. The Buddhist Publication society (BPS) at Kandy, Sri Lanka has done a signal service by publishing over two million books and booklets on every aspect of Buddhism, and distributing them to over ninety countries. These issues are translations of the Buddha's teachings, or draw on these teachings, offering authoritative exposition and reliable translations from the original texts. Because of their literary standards, these works have found worldwide acclaim by scholars and by Buddhists.

As Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera is advancing in age, he has resigned from BPS after thirty years of service. However, he remains BPS's advisor and guiding inspiration. As Editor and President is the noted American scholar, Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi, assisted by the American nun, Ayyā Nyanasirī (Helen Wilder).

Buddhism has secured a home in England. The Buddhist Society of London, and the Buddhist vihāras and institutions deserve special mention for their work in bringing Buddhism to Britain. The



late Ven. Nārada Mahāthera, superior of the Vajirarama, Sri Lanka, a pioneer *Dhammadūta*, and the late Sir Cyril de Zoysa, were instrumental in establishing the London Buddhist Vihāra in 1954. Due to the initiative of this Mahāthera, quite a number of Buddhist societies were inaugurated in both the East and the West.

The Chithurst Forest Monastery in Sussex for monks, and Amarāvati Buddhist Centre in Herts, England for nuns, are large institutions doing commendable service under the able guidance of the American Thera, Achan Sumedho.

The Ven. Mahātheras, Hammalawa Saddhatissa, Piyadassi of the Vajirarama, Mirisse Gunasiri, Medagama Vajiranana, Kurunegoda Piyatissa, Hikgoda Khemananda, Balangoda Ananda Maitreya and Ven. Vinita are some of the Sri Lankan monks who, with wholehearted devotion, worked for the progress of the London Buddhist Vihāra and the dissemination of the Buddha's teachings in England and European countries. Today in England there are a number of monasteries and institutions working for the propagation of Buddhism and religious harmony.

"Das Buddhistisches Haus" or the Berlin Vihāra was founded by a German, Dr. Paul Dahlke. Later the German Dharmadūta Society of Sri Lanka took charge of the institution and a number of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks have been in residence from time to time doing good work for the Buddha Sāsana, the Dispensation of the Buddha. Ven. Mahinda of the Vajirarama is now the resident monk. As in Germany, in France, too, there are a number of Buddhist institutions. In recent times the Ven. Parawahera Chandananda, with the assistance of the laity, and Dr. Ānanda Guruge, Sri Lanka's Ambassador in France and permanent delegate to UNESCO, Paris, has founded the International Buddhist Centre in Paris. Recently two Buddhist Centres were set up in Italy.

Today in many of the larger cities of Germany there are Buddhist Societies and meditation centres. The members are active and they support the "House of Stillness," which is outside the city, for classes, seminars, lectures and meditation. In Germany Buddhist journals are being published. Many books, a large number in paperback, have been printed which have a great demand. As in other countries in the West, here in Germany, books play an important role in the slow but steady

dissemination of Buddhism. There are registered members of Buddhist Societies. In the whole of Germany there are thousands of Buddhists and many more interested in Buddhism.

Buddhism has now penetrated to the Scandinavian countries. So here, just as in almost all countries in the West, there are Buddhist societies, groups and centres for the study of Buddhism and its culture. In Sweden, Sister Amitā (formerly Miss Wagner) is the leader of a society called the "Friends of Buddhism," a group which is keenly active in Buddhist activities. A few years ago a Buddhist Vihāra was established in Stockholm by the Ven. Paranagama Sumanaratana with the assistance of well-wishers. Dr. Henning Sjöström, a leading Buddhist lawyer and author in Stockholm, is a follower of this writer.

When speaking of Buddhism in the Western world one would also like to mention Australia and New Zealand too, though strictly speaking, these countries are not actually in the West. The Buddha's teachings penetrated to these countries in comparatively recent times. But a few ardent workers did their best to slowly but steadily disseminate the message of the Master, both by way of lectures and discussion groups, and by distributing Buddhist literature. Their early efforts have had a profound effect. At present there are many Buddhists in Australia and in New Zealand and a number of Buddhist societies, vihāras and meditation centres including Wat Buddha Dhamma Meditation Centre set in a two hundred acre forest at Ten Mile Hollow, Wisemans Ferry in N.S.W. Ven. Phrā Khantipālo is the superior.

The Bodhinyana (Dhammāloka Buddhist Centre) in Perth, the Bodhinyana (Forest Hermitage) in Serpentine off Perth, the Bodhinyana (Forest Hermitage) in Wellington, and the Buddhist Vihāra in Auckland, New Zealand, are all recently established institutions conducted by energetic Western monks.

Today almost all states of Australia have Buddhist vihāras and centres, both Theravada and Mahayana. In Canberra there is the Laotian temple, in Sydney and Adelaide the Thai temples. The Ven. Shanti Bhadra of Sri Lanka, who has been living in Australia for 16 long years, is the superior of the Brisbane Vihāra. He also worked for 10 years at the Buddhist House in Melbourne. Very recently the Ven. Soma of Sri Lanka, with the support of well-wishers,



established the Melbourne-Sri Lanka Buddhist Vihāra at Springvale in Melbourne. In Darwin an active Buddhist Society is conducting the religious activities at the Darwin Buddhist Vihāra. So we thus can see there is a growing interest in Buddhism in Australia and New Zealand too.

### **Religion and the State**

In Australia, as in other lands in the West, there are thousands of "free thinkers" and "friends of Buddhism." An important change has been made in the Australian schools; for now comparative religion is being taught. With this step and the openness of the population to alternative religions, the children are learning about the basic teachings and traditions. School children are taken to visit the vihāras where they learn about the specific teachings of the Buddha, and some begin to train their minds through Buddhist meditation. It is through the tireless and energetic work of the early Buddhists, undergoing difficulty and hardship, that the Buddhist activities now are not just alive, but growing. These dedicated workers, both clergy and laity, deserve a word of praise here for their efforts and unabated enthusiasm.

The United States of America enjoys a high degree of religious freedom. Religion and the State do not go arm in arm in this country. There is an absolute wall of separation between religion and the state, which is guaranteed by their constitution. This, indeed, is a distinctly American phenomenon for elsewhere even democratic governments favour a particular religious denomination. There are some 265 religious sects listed in the 1960 Year Book of American Churches. Since American society is pluralistic in its nature, its people enjoy complete freedom of thought and expression. Thus the American attitude towards other religions, especially towards Buddhism, is one of tolerance and understanding.

The Dhamma, or the Teachings of the Buddha, was first introduced to the United States over a hundred years ago. Since that time Buddhist ideals have taken root and the Dhamma has spread and flourished. The Buddhist population has increased, first with the influx of Buddhist immigrants from other countries, particularly Asia, and second with more American people embracing Buddhism through Buddhist schools. In the U.S.A. one finds both Theravada and

Mahayana schools of Buddhist thought. Unlike Theravada, the Mahayana doctrine varies from country to country. There are Chinese, Tibetan, Korean, Japanese, Korean Won Buddhist and Vietnamese. In every Buddhist temple one finds American devotees.

Although there is a variety of traditions and organizations and a diversity of forms of teaching, all schools of Buddhism follow Gotama the Buddha and the principal tenets of Buddhism. The four Brahma Vihāras (sublime states): loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity (*mettā, karunā, muditā, upekkhā*) are the same in all the schools of Buddhism. Also followed by all Buddhists is the Buddha's teaching of the Four Noble Truths: all Buddhists try to live following the Noble Eightfold Path.

Several centres of purely Theravada teachings have been established in the United States. In 1964 the Ven. Madihe Paññāsīha Sanghanāyaka Mahāthera, Superior of the Siri Vajirañāna Dharmāyatana (Bhikkhu Training Centre), Sri Lanka, visited the United States. As a result, the first Theravada Buddhist vihara was established in Washington D.C. in 1965. In 1978, the Ven. Dikwela Piyananda Mahāthera of Sri Lanka with the assistance of this writer inaugurated the first Theravada Buddhist Vihara in Toronto, Canada. Ven. Punnañi (Sri Lanka) is the present superior. This vihāra is affiliated to the Washington Vihāra.

At the beginning the Ven. Mahātheras Piyananda, Gunaratana, Piyadassi and Ven. Vinita from Sri Lanka worked hard to fortify and strengthen the Washington Buddhist Vihāra. At a later time the American bhikkhu Ven. Bodhi, during his three year stay at the vihāra did a signal service, especially by putting into working order the literary aspects of the vihāra activities. Mr. Michael I. Roehm, the American Buddhist worker, was an asset to the vihāra from its very inception and he was instrumental in organizing the Vihāra Book Service. The Ven. Dhammasiri (Sri Lanka) is now the superior of the Vihāra. Ven. Gunaratana is the founding president of the Bhāvanā Society (Meditation Center) in West Virginia.

In New York City, the Ven. Kurunegoda Piyatissa is the founding superior of the New York Vihāra. In Los Angeles the Mahātheras Piyadassi and Dhammārāma, with the support of the Buddhist laity,



established the Los Angeles Vihāra and the latter is now the superior of the Los Angeles Vihāra. The Ven. Mahātheras Piyananda, Ratana-sāra and Ānanda (Sri Lanka) founded the Dharmavijaya Buddhist Vihāra in Los Angeles.

A young man from the Hague, the Netherlands, became acquainted with Buddhism, and in 1977 entered the Buddhist Order under the clerical name Dhammavīranātha. With undaunted courage and unflinching energy, he founded the Buddhayāna Centre in the Hague in 1978 which the then few Dutch Buddhists patronized. From the very inception this writer was elected as the Patron of the centre. During the past twelve years Ven. Dhammavīranātha, has done yeoman service both by his pen and his tongue — organizing Buddhist societies in the Netherlands, delivering hundreds of Dhamma talks, conducting discussions and meditation seminars. With the assistance of his followers, he has written and published a number of books in both Dutch and English. His group has also translated books on Buddhism into Dutch. He himself translated and published this writer's *The Buddha's Ancient Path*. Now that the number of members of the Centre has increased, the way is paved for a meditation centre in the countryside. Asian Buddhists in the Netherlands, too, support the centre. Mr. Upasena de Silva, a Sri Lankan, has been a very loyal dāyaka, a supporter of the centre since its very inception. In Amsterdam, a Thai monk, Ven. Mettāvīhāri, inaugurated the Buddha Vihāra. The Saddhatissa Buddhist Centre is in middx, England.

Dr. Murillo Nunes de Azevedo, with the assistance of Ven. Anuruddha, in 1967, established a Buddhist centre in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This writer worked with them, and as a result a meditation centre was founded in the vicinity of Rio de Janeiro at Santa Theresa in 1970. The Ven. Puhulwelle Vipassai Thera is now the resident monk of this centre.

The first organized Buddhist mission to West Africa was undertaken by the present writer in Ghana in 1967. Later a Buddhist Vihāra was established in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. Ven. Dhammasena is the present resident monk of the centre.

In many American universities there are departments of philosophy and of religions where Buddhism is one of the subjects of

study. At these universities religion is discussed from different angles. At Harvard University, for instance, the students are encouraged to survey the subject from a psychological, philosophical, sociological, and historico-evolutionary approach, and to study the academic, theological and moral problem in religious diversity.

Unlike the colleges of many countries, both in the East and West, most of the colleges in the States encourage the study of comparative religion. Students take delight in studying and discussing different religions of the world. They study Buddhism and other religions to understand better the religious and cultural background of the people in the East. It must, however, be said that many Americans are personally interested in Buddhism. They have realized that Buddhism is a "warmer" teaching than they thought it to be. The freedom of thought and expression stressed in Buddhism and its call to the inquirer "to come and examine" and not merely to believe, and the non-theocentric conception of Buddhism fascinate many Americans.

The USA is only slightly older than two hundred years. Nevertheless, the Buddha Dhamma has finally taken firm root in the country. Everywhere young people show no interest in dogmatic beliefs. It is so in America. The advances made in the technological and scientific spheres, by and large, have been materialistic, so that the new generation suffering from a surfeit of luxury, looks for mental peace and tranquility. The younger generation, frustrated by the stifling nature of the dogmatic faith, are attracted by the openness and the clarity in the Buddha's teaching. They turn to Buddhism to quench their thirst for spiritual knowledge.

The basic problems of the Western world are psychological. The youth of the world are in search of inner satisfaction. Mere blind belief in a religion is fast disappearing. Unless a religion cultivates a scientific and democratic outlook, religion will have no future anywhere in the world.

Though Buddhism does not teach science, its teaching is scientific. As in science, in Buddhism, there is the need for observation and experiment. They are two different fields though: science deals with things material while Buddhism deals with the mind and mental factors.



We are indeed living in an age of science—an age where man is inclined to accept the truth of anything only by observation and experiment rather than by mere belief. With the recent advances of science, man is becoming more and more rationalistic in his outlook and blind belief is fast disappearing. Whatever the critics of Buddhism may say, the dispassionate student of early Buddhism will realize that the basic principles of Buddhism are in harmony with the findings of science. The scientific outlook is emphasized in Buddhism when the Buddha says to the sceptic and the inquiring mind: "This doctrine is to be examined, to be seen, and not to be merely believed."

Observation and experiment, which is a fundamental method of science, has a prominent place in Buddhism. The Buddha declared the Dhamma freely and equally to all. He kept nothing back and never wished to extract from his followers blind and submissive faith in him and his teaching. He insisted on observation and experiment, discriminative examination and intelligent inquiry. In no uncertain terms did he urge critical investigation when he addressed the inquiring Kālāmas in a discourse that has been rightly called the first charter of free thought. (See above p.93.)

There are many clear indications today that a very large number of thinking people in the Western world are turning towards the rational and awakening teaching of the Buddha with appreciation and admiration. What is urgently and essentially required are good books, good speakers to give talks and conduct discussions, meditation masters to hold retreats. Dhamma activities must be redoubled and a fresh impetus must be given to these *Dhammadūtas*, the messengers of the Dhamma. The Buddha's teaching must be presented as something vital and relevant to modern trends of thought.

The youth of the world, in their quest for truth and the realisation of inner satisfaction, can be directed onto the correct path through the Buddha's teaching and through meditation. And what needs to be stressed is the essential Dhamma: the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path which consists of right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration, is Buddhism in practice, a teaching for free people. It has no labels, it knows no limits of time, space or race. It is for all time. Each person who lives the Dhamma

brings it to light, can see it, and experiences it himself or herself. It cannot be communicated to another for it has to be self-realized.

Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids commenting on the Sigāla-sutta (D. 31), a discourse on Buddhist ethics, says: "The Buddha's doctrine of love and good-will between man and man is here set forth in a domestic and social ethics with more comprehensive detail than elsewhere ... And truly we may say now even of this Vinaya, or code of discipline, so fundamental are the human interests involved, so sane and wide is the wisdom that envisages them, that the utterances are as fresh and practically as binding today and here as they were then at Rājagaha. 'Happy would have been the village or the clan on the banks of the Ganges, where the people were full of the kindly spirit of fellow-feeling, the noble spirit of justice which breathes through these naive and simple sayings.'<sup>1</sup> Not less happy would be the village or the family on the banks of the Thames today, of which this could be said."<sup>2</sup>

The World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) inaugurated in 1950, in Sri Lanka, was attended by Buddhist leaders from twenty nine countries. Dr. G.P. Malalasekera was elected as Founding President of the WFB. The World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth (WFBY) inaugurated also in Sri Lanka, on May 26, 1972, was attended by Buddhist youth leaders from thirty five countries. Mr. Nemsiri Mutukumara was elected as Founding President of the WFBY.

The Message of the Deer Park has revolutionized the thought and life of the human race. Though this message was delivered 2,500 years back at Sarnath, Bārānasi, it has now penetrated peaceably to the remotest corners of the earth instructing and guiding humanity on the path to deliverance.

During the past twenty-five centuries, the Buddha's teachings and his message to humanity have been tested on the touchstone of time. His message of universal peace and tolerance attracts us today in spite of the vast geographical and social changes that time has wrought in world conditions in this long and eventful period.

#### Notes:

1. T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism* (London, 1907), p. 148.
2. *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Part iii. p.168.



## Shorter Essays

### Democracy and its Relation to Buddhism

If democracy is understood in its widest and broadest sense, it must necessarily include within the scope of its meaning the idea of freedom of the mind. This subject is being examined not with the purpose of dealing with democracy in all its various aspects in which freedom of the mind becomes its basis, but with the limited purpose of showing that ideals of democracy and freedom of the mind are woven into the very structure of Buddhism.

What are the principles of democracy? A true democracy allows free speech: government by the people, a representative government, the state having a government elected by the people. The democracy of the courts in such a government provides equal justice for all: fairness, equality, political equality.

Word origin: "Democracy" is from the Greek *demos* (people)+ *krateein* (to rule), hence a form of government in which the people have and exercise political power. A democrat is thus one who advocates or upholds such a form of government. According to Harry Emerson Fosdick: "Democracy is based upon the conviction that there are extraordinary possibilities in ordinary people."

"In the western world democracy began to evolve in Greece around 450 B.C. That is almost about 2,500 years ago at the time when the Buddha was born ... now because democracy was discussed in early Greece, many people had the misconception that democracy started in Greece. That is historically incorrect. It was only ideas in their constitution ... The great foundation thinkers of the Western world, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle discussed democracy but rejected it as an unsuitable form of government. Ideas about modern representational democracy spread in Western Europe in the 19th and 20th

centuries and so we see a lot of democracies developing in Europe in more recent times. It is not a very extensive record. The people who think that democracy came from the West are historically making a mistake ....

“Non-Western political democracy takes its early form in India, in village ‘*Panchayats*’ in isolated places about 2300, 2400 or 2500 years ago. Some of these developed under the influence of Buddhism. But for a long time most of the countries in Asia were governed by autocratic monarchs and colonialism till the 20th century. We must then conclude that as a wide spectrum of government, democracy had a very limited history everywhere in the world and also in Asia. In Asia we had great civilizations but not much democracy.

“Yet, today, suddenly there is a great surge of democracy in the Western world. In Eastern Europe, in many parts of the Third World, democracy is rising and this is becoming an era of democracy.

“The similarity between Buddhism and democracy is perceived in the teachings of the Buddha. His advocacy of tolerance, the idea of discussion, extraordinary freedom of choice, equality, non-violence, impermanence—every one of these ideas went against the customs of his time. They were revolutionary concepts introduced by the Buddha 2500 years ago. They were major intellectual innovations ... But they were all democratic in content and intent.” (From a lecture delivered by Prof. Ralph Buultjens on “Buddhism and Democracy,” published in *The Sunday Observer*, July 15, 1990.)

A fascinating conversation between the Buddha and his attendant disciple Ānanda is recorded in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta (D.ii.74). The Buddha had taught the Vajjians seven things that prevent decline. Addressing Thera Ānanda, the Buddha said: “Ānanda, have you heard that the Vajjians hold regular and frequent meetings?” “So have I heard, Lord.” “Ānanda, as long as the Vajjians hold regular and frequent meetings, they may be expected to prosper and not decline. Have you heard that the Vajjians meet and disperse peacefully in concord, and carry on their affairs in concord?” “So have I heard, Lord.” “Ānanda, as long as the Vajjians meet in concord, disperse in concord, and carry on their affairs in concord, they may be expected to prosper and not decline.” (For details read *Thus Have I*



*Heard*—a new translation of the Digha Nikāya by Maurice Walshe, Wisdom Publication, London, p. 231 and *Last Days of the Buddha*, Kandy, BPS.)

Now this is a clear statement and appreciation of a nascent form of democracy in that ancient world.

India had outstanding Buddhist kings: Asoka the Great in the third century B.C., Kanishka in the second century B.C., Harsha (*Shilāditya*) in the eighth century A.C. Great Buddhist governmental systems and great Buddhist civilizations developed.

It is clear that democracy means a form of government in which all classes of people share in the government by choosing representatives; or a country having this kind of government, especially a country where there is freedom of thought and speech. In modern usage democracy often denotes a social state in which all have equal rights.

Democracy, therefore, is diametrically opposed to autocracy which is government by a single ruler whose power is unlimited. In other words, totalitarianism. A totalitarian government includes control of everything under one authority and allows no opposition. Bertrand Russell writes in *Why I am not a Christian*, p.135:

The principle of liberal democracy, which inspired the founders of the American constitution, was that controversial questions should be decided by argument rather than by force. Liberals have always held that opinions should be performed by untrammelled debate, not by allowing only one side to be heard. Tyrannical governments, both ancient and modern, have taken the opposite view .... If I held power I should not seek to prevent my opponents from being heard. I should seek to provide equal facilities for all opinions, and leave the outcome to the consequences of discussion and debate.

Two important features of our time are science and democracy. They are spreading in the Western world and are now pressing hard on Asian countries. They have come to stay. They cannot be expunged. People, especially the younger generation, are making use of these two as their criteria to view things. They want to know how far things are scientific and democratic. They even look at religion with these

two "eyes." Is religion scientific? Is a religious institution democratic? These are the questions they raise.

In a democratic country education should be widespread. Nevertheless, education need not be merely academic in character. People must cultivate love, patience, forbearance, righteousness and integrity.

It is no exaggeration to say that of all the religions, it is Buddhism that speaks most about freedom of the mind, for Buddhism is the most psychological of religions. Psychology looms large in Buddhism and the Buddha gives the greatest importance to mind in his scheme of deliverance. Freedom of the mind is the sum total of the Buddha's teaching.

The Master says: "I have directed you towards freedom; the truth is to be self-realized. The Buddhas only show the way" (Dhp. 276). "This doctrine has but one taste, that of freedom" (A. iv, 203). The song of victory sung by the disciples of the Buddha on reaching the acme of purity and peace is just this: "Delivered is my mind; released am I from bonds" (*cittam me vimucci, muttosmi bandhanā*).

In order to understand fully the ideal of freedom of the mind it is necessary to appreciate the importance of the mind. If there is no proper understanding of the importance of the human mind, one can never appreciate to its fullest extent the reason why it is so necessary to safeguard the freedom of the mind.

The very first verse of the *Dhammapada* emphasizes its importance:

"All mental states have mind as their forerunner,  
As their chief; and of mind are they made."

The Buddha never interfered with another man's freedom of thought; for freedom of thought is the birthright of every individual. It is wrong to force someone out of the way of life which accords with his outlook and character, spiritual inclination and tendencies. Compulsion in every form is bad. It is coercion of the blackest kind to make a person swallow beliefs for which he has no relish; such forced feeding cannot be good for anyone, anywhere.



In the understanding of things, mere belief and fear do not play any role in Buddhist thought. A man must be allowed to grow in that way which will bring out his best. Any regimentation of thought is direct interference with that unfolding of the spirit. A Buddhist considers such interference as intolerance of the worst kind.

Both freedom of the mind and democracy are things that are dear to us, things we like very much. Bondage, autocracy or totalitarianism, on the other hand, are things that people with eyes to see and minds to understand will detest. As the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights* says: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression."

### Real Meaning

Though the word "democracy" is in common use in most parts of the world today, its real meaning and significance is often not fully realized. Democracy is a way of life that influences the people of a country in diverse ways. It is a dynamic force which emerges as a process.

The great American poet, Walt Whitman, said: "Did you too, O friend, suppose democracy is only for elections, for politics and for a party name? I say democracy is only of use there that it may pass on and come to its flower and fruits in manners, in the highest form of interaction between men, and their beliefs—in religious literature, colleges and schools—democracy in all public and private life ...."

When people live in a genuine democracy, they know it, feel it and breathe it. In the last letter which Thomas Jefferson of the U.S.A. ever wrote, he said: "The mass of mankind was not born with saddles on their backs, nor a favoured few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately by the grace of God."

In an atmosphere of democracy there surely cannot exist masters and slaves. Democracy is individual salvation as well as national salvation. To achieve this we must understand the value and importance of all humans irrespective of caste, colour, creed, sex or any other division. When we speak of the good of society do we not mean the good of all individuals composing it? We must give the individual his or her right place, and raise each one from lower to higher levels.

Those materially minded will say that there are certain material things without which we cannot live. Very true. The Buddha too emphasizes the material needs when he mentions the bare necessities of Buddhist monks, his disciples, namely robes (clothes), food, shelter and medicine. Basically these are also the fundamental needs of the laity. Although the Buddha did not attach much importance to material progress in the modern sense, nor to mundane welfare, he did not entirely ignore it, because it is the basis for man's mental or spiritual progress.

If people are deprived of the four requisites, the bare necessities, or if they are scarce, especially food, people's minds are not at rest. They cannot and do not think of moral behaviour, nor do they give a thought to righteous living. Man as a member of society should work hard to earn a living and strengthen his economic and social position lest he should become a burden to himself and others; but at the same time he must avoid wrong and unrighteous ways of living and not deviate from the path of duty and rectitude. In Buddhism both motive and effect must be taken into consideration.

However good the motive may be, if the effect is not going to be healthy, one should refrain from such misguided words and deeds. We should also be on our guard against taking only the material aspect of life and over-emphasizing it in our enthusiasm to serve others. Both the material and the moral and mental aspects of life should be taken together if our development is to be balanced and not lopsided. True democracy should have a realistic, philosophical and religious basis. People of understanding, people who are not muddle-headed, will realize that while there are certain material things without which we cannot live, there are other moral and spiritual values without which we do not care to live.

### **Duties of a King**

There is a very close affinity between Buddhism and democracy. The Buddha appeared at a time when autocracy was prevalent in India. Most of the states were feudal, being under a *rājā* or king as in the case of the Buddha's own clan, the Sakyans. There were also republics such as that of the Lichchavis (Vajjians) which were governed by a Senate of Elders. In the kingdoms, the *rājā* was the ruler to whom all



were subservient and to whom they owed their allegiance. Life seems to have been quiet compared with that in many lands today.

The Buddha's teaching, however, was somewhat of a threat to autocratic governments of the country. Yet the Buddha did not interfere with the politics and the government of the country for he was never a meddler in things where interference was useless. This, however, did not deter him from giving voice to his democratic thoughts and views.

In the Buddhist Canon we find sermons on the life that the ruler or administrator ought to lead. Cited are the Ten Duties or Principles of a King (*dasa-rāja-dhamma*): *Generosity in giving, morality, self-sacrifice or unselfishness, honesty, gentleness, not being given to luxurious living, self-restraint, non-anger, non-violence, patience and agreeability* (Jātaka I. 260). Special emphasis should be laid on the word "agreeability" for that indicates that the king must respect the wishes of the people. As the Buddha points out, it is the ruler who should first establish himself in Dhamma, in piety and righteousness, avoiding the vices, and so give the lead to his subjects.

### King Asoka

In this respect, Asoka the Great of India may be regarded as one of the most just, wise and benevolent rulers of all time. This is shown by his edicts:

"All men are my children."

"Just as I want my own children to enjoy all property and happiness in this life and the next, so I want the same for all men."

"The world should be comforted by me. From me the world should receive happiness and not sorrow." (Edict I)

"There is no duty higher than to promote the happiness of the whole world."

"Work I must for the good of the whole world." (Edict II)

It can be said without a trace of doubt that King Asoka, who followed the advice of the Buddha for the righteous administration of the country, was a model ruler and, as H.G.Wells wrote: "Amidst the

tens of thousands of monarchs ... that crowd the columns of history the name of Asoka shines and shines almost alone, a star" (*The Outline of History*, London: Cassel & Co., 1934, p. 402).

Jawaharlal Nehru, the late premier of India, addressing the members of the Indian Congress, once said: "I have enough faith in me to bow my head down when the Buddha's name is mentioned. The path which the Buddha and Asoka had shown has not been forgotten and has somehow remained in the minds of India. Mahatma Gandhi followed the same path in our lifetime and following that path the prestige and strength of the nation was raised. If any question has to be considered it has to be considered peacefully and democratically in the way taught by the Buddha."

### Democratic Ideas

The Buddha's teaching definitely encourages democratic ideas and institutions. He made the *Sangha*, the community of monks, an absolutely democratic institution. The Marquess of Zetland, a former Viceroy of India, writes in the introduction to *The Legacy of India*:

It is probable that the tendency towards self-government evidenced by these various forms of corporate activity received fresh impetus from the Buddhist rejection of the authority of the priesthood and further by its doctrine of equality as exemplified by its repudiation of caste. It is, indeed, to the Buddhist books that we have to turn for account of the manner in which the affairs of these early examples of representative self-governing institutions were conducted. And it may come as a surprise to many to learn that in the assemblies of Buddhists in India two thousand years and more ago are to be found the rudiments of our own parliamentary practice of the present day. The dignity of the Assembly was preserved by the appointment of a special officer—the embryo of 'Mr. Speaker' in our House of Commons. A second officer was appointed whose duty it was to see that when necessary a quorum was secured—the prototype of the Parliamentary Chief Whip in our own system. A member initiating business did so in the form of a motion which was then open to discussion. In some cases, this was done once only, in others three times, thus anticipating the practice of Parliament in



requiring that a Bill be read a third time before it becomes law. If discussion disclosed a difference of opinion the matter was decided by the vote of the majority, the voting being by ballot.

Even the modern idea of voting by proxy is found in the Buddha's code of discipline, Vinaya.

When communicating the teaching to his disciples, the Buddha made no distinction whatsoever amongst them, for there were no specially chosen favourite disciples. Special favours were never granted to anyone by the Master. Upali, for instance, who came from a barber's family was made the chief in matters of discipline in preference to many who belonged to the class of the nobles and warriors. This is true democracy worthy of the name.

There is no indication that the Buddha entrusted the dispensation (*sāsana*) to any particular disciple before he passed away. He did not appoint anyone as his successor. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Buddha made clear to his disciples before he passed away that he never thought of controlling the Order. Addressing the monks he said: "The Doctrine and the Discipline (*Dhamma-Vinaya*) which I have set forth and laid down for you, let them after I am gone be the teacher to you."

He declared the doctrine freely and equally to all. He kept nothing back. He had no such thing as the "closed fist" of a teacher who hides some essential knowledge from the pupil; and he never wished to extract from his disciples blind and submissive faith in him and his teaching. He insisted on discriminative and intelligent inquiry. In no uncertain terms did he urge critical investigation when he addressed the inquiring Kālāmas in a discourse that has been rightly called the first charter of free inquiry. (See above p. 93.)

## Keynote

Supreme security from bondage is the keynote of Buddhism. With this end in view the Buddha taught humanity the value of free thought. So long as man is bound by views, ideas and ideologies forced on him, man's mind cannot grow in strength and power. It is clear therefore that democracy has, what one may term, a levelling effect on the value placed on various sections and grades of society.

Man has to be respected because he is man. Woman has to be respected because she is woman. The barriers of caste, and colour and race, the barriers of wealth and family prestige, the barriers of power and office are broken asunder and the innate value of man as man or woman as woman is recognised. This is exactly the point of view of Buddhism.

The social conditions in India before the advent of Buddhism were badly stained and smeared with considerations of caste and clan. A Brahmin, who is said to belong to the highest social grade, would look down upon a non-Brahmin. It was left to the Buddha to destroy this false supremacy of the Brahmin clan. Discourses like the Vasala (Sn. p. 21), etc., clearly indicate that the Buddha has been at pains to preach the equality of man. If there is anything that should distinguish one man from another and make him high or low, it is man's actions. Said the Master: "By action one becomes a Brahmin; by actions one becomes an outcaste." (*Ibid.*)

In a free and democratic society, what we need is peace and not dissension, wrangling and animosity. Democracy stands for peace and unity and not for war and disunity. The whole world seems to be passing through difficult times. There is too much strife, ill will and distrust in the atmosphere of the world. It is in this suffocating atmosphere of tension and strife that our minds should turn to the Buddha's message of love and understanding.

The question is to know how the world could peacefully exist. The world has progressed much in the invention of destructive weapons, but as yet man is not able to have full control of his mind. The greatest need is to build up the character of the people. If we wish to save our culture, we should change our natures. The United Nation's Charter only echoes the word of the Buddha when it points out that all quarrels, conflicts and wars have their origin in the minds of men and it is there that they have to be curbed.

When we study history, we find that all the havoc wrought in the world is wrought by men who have not learned the way of mental calm, balance and poise. This weakness of character is due to the outbursts of folly and fury, intolerance and violence, and the fatal grimness of man to man. Even today we see animosity, intolerance, disunity and tension growing without any check. People are



intoxicated with the desire for fame, gain, wealth, power and gratification of the senses.

## **Discipline**

Some governments have exploited the inherent fear complex of humanity for purposes of stability and peace, but to intelligent people who are convinced of the deep value of democracy, such a remedy is not acceptable. No nation can progress unless it is disciplined, and discipline must be cultivated from within and cannot be imposed by others. Discipline cannot be brought about by coercion and compulsion, nor even by science, but only by sincerely following a religion which stands for peace, purity and happiness. A religious view of life is instrumental in establishing mental harmony and well-being. Today, more than at any other time, we need the light of the Dhamma, truth and righteousness, love and understanding.

We must understand that we are here not merely to seek our own but to love and serve our fellow beings irrespective of race, class, colour and creed. No one can live in isolation. People are dependent upon one another. They must learn to live together with gentle looks of loving-kindness instead of the cold indifference and fierce glare of unfriendliness.

In order to give practical effect to the will of the people, it is very necessary that the people should meet together often. This is emphasized by the Buddha in his advice to the Vajjians referred to in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta.

Speaking of democracy, the President of Sri Lanka, Ranasinha Premadasa, observes: "... Democracy is about people. People must have access to the institutions that shape and implement policies"

"And by people, I mean, more than just the representatives they elect once in every five or six years. By people, I mean the ordinary, anonymous people who live in our towns and countryside. I mean the silent-masses. They must be given the opportunity to participate in government."

"Much of my culture and values I derive from a common heritage with India. King Dharmasoka, the Head of the great Mauryan

Empire, has been for me a great inspiration. So in what sense can I be anti-Indian?" (*A Charter for Democracy in Sri Lanka*)

"Urging youth to join him in the fight against South Africa's apartheid regime, the pint-sized, Black Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu from Johannesburg, told a hushed crowd: 'God moulded man in clay, he put the first lot in the oven and went about some other business. By the time he remembered to open the oven, its contents were over-baked—browned and blackened. Those were our people.' Then Tutu paused for a while. The reputed story-teller, man of wit and humour, the Bishop, heavily flanked by police security, then said 'God was taking no chances with the second lot. Lest he forget again, he quickly removed them from the oven to find them "under done. Those were the white people,' he said to thunderous applause.

Tutu, the leader of the two million South African Anglicans, and the first Secretary-General of South African Churches, emphasising the value of freedom, told his young listeners that God would rather have men go freely to hell, than being forced to heaven ... 'You have walked for freedom, you have sung for freedom, you have stood up to be counted for freedom and you have brought wonderful hope to the hearts of many.' " (*Among My Souvenirs*, Kirthie Abeysekera, pages 377, 379, 380).

Today there is ceaseless work going on in all directions to improve the world. Scientists are continuing their experiments and scientific methods with determination, with undiminished vigour and unflagging enthusiasm. Modern means of communication and contact have produced startling results; the progress of science has done much good to humanity. All these improvements — though they have their advantages and rewards — are entirely material and external.

### **Limitation of Democracy**

In spite of these material and external developments and improvements, most people are not in a state of security. They are threatened with disaster and destruction. The people of the world today are restless, weary and racked with fear and discontent, and we should not rest satisfied with the hope that a magic wand will put things right for us. If the world is to emerge from the present unrest it



needs not only scientists and technologists, but humanists too. There must be right understanding and kindly feeling. If only the love and compassion that throb through the teachings of the Enlightened Ones of old ruled man's action today, we should not be living in this atmosphere of suspicion, fear, jealousy, greed, hate and delusion.

If democracy is the unhindered and unfettered representation of the will of the people who enjoy freedom of the mind, what guarantee is there that the will of the people is correct? What guarantee is there that what they wish is the correct thing to wish? And that it is the best thing for them? Freedom of the mind is good, but freedom can run riot. These are some of the limitations of democracy. Being a man-made institution, democracy partakes of the limitations of the finite human mind. Buddhism does not uphold freedom of the mind as the highest goal. Buddhism climbs higher. Buddhism, aiming as it does at freedom from everything, aims at freedom from the mind also. This, of course, is something outside the mundane point of view.

## Buddhism and World Peace

Over ninety years ago General Sherman said, "I am tired and sick of war. Its glory is all moonshine .... War is hell." More than one hundred years before that Benjamin Franklin had said: "There never was a good war or a bad peace."

A hundred years earlier John Milton declared: "For what can war breed, but still endless war." Two thousand years before Milton, Thucydides, the Athenian historian, in his *History* saw that "war is an evil, something that we all know and it would be pointless to go on cataloguing all the disadvantages involved in it."

And two hundred years earlier still, Siddhattha Gotama, the Buddha, the Prince of Peace (*Santirājā*), almost twenty-six centuries ago delivered discourse after discourse to show the evil of fighting.

His address to his immediate disciples in the mandate which he gave to them contains the idea of peace; for he said: "Wander forth, disciples, for the welfare and happiness of gods and human-kind. Deliver the peace-breathing message of the Dhamma" (Vinaya Mahāvagga).

War, which was once a method of obtaining trade by violence, now is a profitable trade in itself. The manufacture of lethal weapons and poisons makes huge profits, some of which are used to pay the supporters "war for this and for that" with always a new excuse and a new bogey to frighten timid objectors. Time was when nations believed in the prescription that if you want peace you must prepare for war, but a survey of the international events during the last few decades will disprove the efficacy of the prescription.

A sure prescription would be in the light of what the Buddha Gotama proclaimed 2,500 and more years ago: "Hatred is never



appeased through hatred in this world; by love alone does it appease. This is an ancient principle" (Dhp. v, 5).

The United Nations is the trustee of the world's peace and represents the hopes of humankind. It was created with the principal objective of maintaining and promoting peace. This organization is especially significant at times of tension and crises.

Today the whole world is passing through difficult times. Our world is beset with problems that are eroding the foundations of peace and goodwill of all people. There is an increasing abuse of drugs and social pollution among the younger generation without any signs of a halt to this moral bankruptcy.

Man is becoming more aware and cautious of the pollution in the air, sea and land. But is man aware of the moral pollution that has infused the world today? In spite of amazing scientific and technological progress, the goal of a just and peaceful civilization continues to be elusive, and the man-made materialistic panaceas have failed to provide satisfaction.

Experts tell us that scientific and technological knowledge has doubled in the past decades, but so have world problems. Why? Obviously material knowledge and scientific and technological know-how have not brought man the answers to world problems. This type of knowledge has only led to the proliferation of problems and has led humankind to the brink of nuclear annihilation.

The late President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower said: "Science seems ready to confer upon us, as its final gift, the power to erase human life from this planet." But how may world disaster be averted? What is the solution to the arms race to nuclear Armageddon?

Some political doctrines of the present century have stated that economic development is the "be all" and "end all," and that if the people are economically well off then all is well. It is a fallacy that spiritual values or the values of the mind are not necessary if there is the scientific one. It is a weakness of the present day civilization that spiritual values are ignored.

To control our selfish impulses we need effort and discipline. These should come not from science but from the discipline of religion.

As a practical teacher of infinite compassion and understanding, the Buddha was mindful of the social and economic well-being of the masses and always wished by his advice to alleviate the misery of the people and see that they lived without too much unhappiness.

It is obvious that without a certain degree of material and economic security no moral and spiritual progress can be achieved. According to the teaching of the Buddha, economic security should go arm in arm with spiritual values. Man should not deviate from the path of duty, rectitude and righteousness but should try to seek a balance between material and spiritual values.

With the march of modern science very many changes have taken place and all these changes and improvements, being material and external, tend to make modern man more and more worldly-minded and sensuous with the result that he neglects, or purposely ignores, the qualities of the heart and becomes self-interested and heartless. The waves of materialism seem to influence humankind and affect its way of thinking and living. People are so bound by the senses, they live so exclusively in the material world, that they fail to contact the good within.

If the major powers do not change heart we will have to face unparalleled human tragedy. The world is in dread of war. War would mean the complete destruction of the human race. A change of heart by the big powers is the only solution to world peace. All genuine peace conferences and prayer meetings will be instrumental in carrying the message of world peace to the people at the helm of affairs.

Smaller nations are at war because they are assisted by the rich and powerful nations. The battle for power between these rich and powerful countries goes on—the ball is thrown from one court to the other. Remedial measures to prevent a world catastrophe should come from the heart.

One calls to mind an incident of the early sixties when China's Premier, Chou En-lai, visited India to discuss the Indo-China border



dispute. At this historic meeting India's then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, cited a quotation from the *Dhammapada*, v, 201:

"The victor creates enmity (in the defeated);  
The defeated live in distress.  
The peaceful live happily,  
Giving up both victory and defeat."

As wars begin in the minds of men, we should bear in mind that we live on a tiny speck of the universe called "the earth." Many think that this earth is progressing. "We have all we need today" they say. Yes, people have even gone to the moon. They have brought almost everything under their sway. They have material wealth, facilities, and comforts to gratify their senses.

There are intellectuals, eminent writers, orators, medical men, philosophers, psychologists, economists, lawyers, and engineers, etc. In spite of all these the world is lacking in peace, harmony, solidarity and mutual responsibility.

As the Buddha has said: "Seek yourself." All remedial means must reach the heart. We must individually establish peace in our own hearts before we carry the message of peace to others and to the world.

What we need today is to bring about a change in man's mind more than a change in the environment. Since wars begin in the minds of men, since conflicts are the cause of war, in our quest for peace, we have to remove the causes of conflicts. The preamble to the UNESCO Charter reminds us that "It is in the minds of men that the defence of peace must be constructed."

Twenty-five centuries ago the Buddha made the same declaration. He went even much further than that; he declared that all things good and evil have their origin in the mind.

Says the Buddha: "Often should one reflect upon one's mind thus: 'For a long time has this mind been defiled by greed, hatred and delusion (ignorance). Mental defilements make beings impure, mental cleansing purifies them ....' "

Mere outward propagation and the use of slogans cannot solve this pressing problem of war which has its roots in the mind. Every man has a better man within himself.

If only the love and understanding that throb through the teachings of the Enlightened Ones of all ages ruled man's action today, we should not be living in this atmosphere of suspicion, fear, jealousy, arrogance, greed, hate and delusion that makes this world more and more an armed camp and drives us steadily to the brink of Armageddon.

Real happiness and true peace are synonyms. There cannot be any happiness without peace. The goal of the Dhamma is peace, and Dhamma, above all, is the way to the attainment of peace. Let us make a sincere and genuine effort to spread peace, solidarity and brotherhood of man through Dhamma and remove tension arising in the name of religion, caste, colour and other elements of disunity and disharmony.

When speaking of world peace, representatives of different religions have an important and significant role to play. Let us start this peace movement in our own countries both by preaching and writing on the theme of peace. Let us also go from village to village and town to town and speak to the people on the blessings of unity and peace and instruct, enlighten and gladden them as did the Buddha in India, 2500 and more years ago.

Nations must work for their own welfare and development, but they should also take notice of, and not ignore, the larger purpose of peace and universal security. All nations, whether they are in the third world or otherwise, need peace; for without peace there will be no progress, no development, no harmony in the lives of the people. When there is peace people can work with self-reliance and their development is based on self-reliance.

Twenty-three centuries ago Emperor Asoka of India inscribed on stone: "*Sama vāyo eva sādhu*—Concord, indeed, is commendable." Asoka the Great followed in the footsteps of his Master, Siddhattha Gotama the Buddha, who said: "*Samaggā hotha mā vivadatha*—Be united; wrangle not." These are the positive utterances we need today more than at any other time; for we live in an age of conflict and war, of hatred and violence all over the world. Never before has the need been greater for all of us to remember the sublimating and edifying message of Sakyamuni Buddha and Asoka.



Today we speak of peace. Yes, peace is our birthright, and we must win it, peace based on truth, love, justice and freedom. If people are just and upright, stand to reason and face facts, the bonds of amity and understanding among the various nations, races, communities and religions will greatly strengthen.

The principles of non-interference by one state in the internal affairs of another, and political independence of all states are essential to the principle of peaceful co-existence. Mutual and scrupulous respect for one another's territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence and harmony in the world are things the value of which nobody will contest.

Love rests not on strife but on sympathy. The principle of love should be appreciated and applied in all the spheres of human activity in order to bring about an increase of human happiness and better social behaviour. Peace is not a negative phrase. It is something very positive. It consists of mutual understanding, co-operation and love. In such an atmosphere alone true peace can arise. Peace has to be acquired by a sincere and devoted struggle. It cannot be won by merely speaking about it. *We should think peace, speak peace and act peace.*

The chief idea behind all peace-loving organisations like the United Nations is that all humankind are sisters and brothers. If that be so, how can people kill one another, hate others, grab others' land and enslave another nation? How can they deprive another of his or her birthright? Today no one is independent, no country is really independent. We have to depend on other countries for our bare necessities, for our basic needs of food, clothes, shelter and medicine. Modern methods of communication and contact have produced startling results. The printed word, radio, television, modern education, etc., have brought people closer to one another. Space travel makes us feel the whole universe is one and that we are one world.

A factor that contributes greatly to the spread of peace in society is right speech. There is a saying: "*The spoken word, the sped arrow and the lost opportunity can never be recalled.*" Speech is a gift of great value since through it we can express thoughts and ideas which can be shared with others. But if the tongue, which is boneless and

pliable, is allowed to become unruly, it can play havoc. Is it not responsible for much strife and trouble from squabbles between families to wars between nations? If man could but tame his tongue, would not the world be a far better place to live in?

Thus a follower of the Noble Path "lives having contemplated with thought of love, with thought of compassion, with thought of appreciative joy and with thought of equanimity, one direction; likewise, the second; likewise, the third; likewise, the fourth; thus above, below, and around; he lives pervading the entire world, everywhere and equally, whole-heartedly with thought of love, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity, ample, grown great, measureless, free from enmity and distress." If we develop these moral qualities, even the stars in their courses cannot defeat us.

### Peace through *Pancasīla*

From the Buddhist point of view, another way of promoting peace is by following the five precepts. Buddhists or non-Buddhists, anyone who observes the minimum five precepts (*pancasīla*—abstinence from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and drunkenness) brings about peace and harmony everywhere. People do not fear or doubt those who observe and practise the five precepts; for they are not murderers, thieves, immoral persons, liars and drunkards, but good-hearted people who try to spread peace, harmony, brotherhood and solidarity. Let us now make a brief survey of the five precepts.

Liberality should be practised not only with regard to human beings. Our dumb and forlorn fellows of the animal kingdom too must experience our liberality. All who are capable of benefiting by our gifts should be made partakers of our liberality.

The giving of material gifts and alms, however, blesses only a few. But he who cultivates virtue blesses all sentient beings. He gives to all beings the gift of fearlessness by his stainless conduct.

Therefore, the Master taught thus: "Here, O monks, a disciple giving up killing is restrained as regards killing ... giving up theft is restrained as regards theft ... giving up sexual wrong is restrained as regards sexual wrong ... giving up untrue speech is restrained as regards untrue speech ... giving up drink is restrained as regards drink,



and thereby blesses all sentient beings with the gift of security, non-hate, and harmlessness."

That kind of conduct which brings happiness and ease of mind, which never gives room for remorse and repentance to come up, which leads to a good destiny and is the basis of the good life here and now is called virtue.

### **i. Killing**

One abstains from killing other beings because one knows how dear life is to oneself and so infers that it must be the same for others. All happiness of men in this world depends on their lives. So to deprive them of that which contains all good for them is cruel and heartless in the extreme. Is it, therefore, a wonder that those who destroy others' lives bring on themselves the hate and ill will of those they slay?

But those who refrain from the slaughter of beings, who are, as it were, protectors of all living sentient things, who give all other beings the gift of security are like mighty trees that shelter and shade people, bird and beast with their myriad foliage.

Even though their lives be in grave peril and death with all its terrors confronts them, they stand firm in their determination to save from harm all other forms that pulse with sentience.

### **ii. Theft**

Things which belong to another, things of which another is the master, are never wrongly taken by him who walks according to the Dhamma. To take things wrongly from others, violently or by compulsion or by deceit, is against all standards of decency and gentlemanly conduct. Says an olden book:

"The wrongful taking of others' substance becomes the cause of one's own loss of goods." And again: "Worse deathtrap there is none than robbery." For who robs and spoils others becomes subject to the king's punishment and the people's indignation, to endless suffering and tribulation. Therefore should one avoid this evil action of wrongly taking others' property as one would avoid poison, fire, and fearful deadly snakes. Who keeps the rule of abstaining from theft gains in

inner and outer well-being. He lives a happy life, gives happiness to others, and fares well after death.

### iii. Misconduct

He who abstains from sexual wrong is blessed with a heart that is ever at peace and serene, and a body possessed of strength and energy at all times. He is moving on towards higher ways of life and nobler states of thought.

Who chastely lives wins beauty, strength,  
And good men's praise and boon of health;  
His mind is clear and fit to tread  
The Path to Truth; and he is wed  
To noble thought, to kindly deed,  
And speech that's pure; he sows the seed  
Of virtues rare; makes all to sprout,  
And blossom. Then rich fruit brings out.

But sad is the fate of him who goes wrong sexually. He soils his own mind-flux and others'.

### iv. False Speech

Truth is the speech of inward purity. Who abstains from false speech wins the trust and confidence of many, and is honoured by those who know him. It is an abstention pre-eminently practised by the Bodhisattas, the beings who are in search of perfect enlightenment. Of them it is said that they never utter untruth, in any circumstances whatsoever. The speaker of truth is free from fear and trembling in the midst of assemblies. He is ever courageous and firm, and unshakable even when confronted with the greatest hostility. He is strong with the strength of a mighty host in full panoply, because his heart is crystal-clear, pure and speckless. He is always pleasant and gentle, courteous and helpful, restrained and patient, a speaker who delights and calms others with the effortless eloquence of truth. Such a one may truly say of himself:

Pure is my heart for all that's true I think;  
Clear, my mind; there no dark lies slink.  
Clean my speech, rid of things that soil,  
A smooth soft kindly flow of limpid oil.



The liar is everywhere discredited. He who is shameless enough to speak untruth has no virtue in his heart. There is no wrong that a deliberate liar cannot perpetrate. So say the books.

If one who has taken on the life of the homeless monk utters untruth, then by that very utterance one makes his monkhood empty. "Empty, O Rāhula, is the life of that monk who shamelessly utters untruth," says the Master urging on his son the importance of true speech in the holy life (M.61).

Further, it is said that the liar comes to get a bad destiny hereafter. He becomes dull, stupid, hideous of presence, repellent to others, and passes on to states of becoming where he loses the power of speech.

#### v. Intoxicants

One abstains from intoxicants in order to keep the mind free from confusion. Drink and drugs are destructive of right thinking, that is, thinking based on non-hate, non-violence and renunciation. He who takes intoxicants becomes angry, cruel, infatuated. Therefore, the follower of the Buddha, knowing well the disadvantages of wrong thinking which follows intoxication, does not taint his mind with the poison of drink which burns out the germinal power of the seeds of good in his mind. Speaking of the evils of drink, Āryasūra in his Jātakamālā says:

"O lord of men, how canst thou e'er partake  
Of that drink by which good qualities fully break,  
Which stuns all worth, doth violence to good name,  
Blurs mind's vision and drives out all shame?"

Such is the treasure of virtue which men wishing for happiness should increase and protect. It is the right expedient for winning all good things here and hereafter.

All inner wealth has virtue for source. Like a rich mine which yields countless jewels, virtue gives endless delight to the good man.

Virtue is the ground from which one takes off to the high place of perfect holiness.

Virtue is the charmed weapon to slay the passions, and the coat of mail that wards off all the blows of Māra (death).

Virtue makes life pleasant, imbues it with power and vitalises and refreshes it.

Virtue is like the cool, cleansing, fertilizing rain.

The virtuous attain to the splendour of great renown, wealth and honour.

The man of virtue is always mindful and completely aware. At the moment of death he is free from all confused thinking and is calm and composed.

Because of these things that go along with virtue one fosters it, guards it and protects it with the single-minded devotion of a mother protecting her only child, the apple of her eye. It bestows fearlessness, security, peace and compassion on all beings.

The Buddhist concept of love and compassion (*mettā* and *karuṇā*) have no compromising limitations. The Buddhist view of life is such that no living being is considered as outside the circle of *mettā* and *karuṇā*. These two virtues make no distinction between men as high or low, rich or poor, strong or weak, wise or unwise, dark or fair, brahmin or chaṇḍāla, or as Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Jew, Buddhist, etc. *Mettā* and *karuṇā* are boundless and no sooner do we try to keep men apart on the false bases mentioned above, than the feeling of separateness creeps in and these boundless qualities become limited—which is contrary to the high ideal of the exponent of these virtues.

All beings suffer in one way or another. Suffering may be physical or mental or both. All know the pain of starvation, of want of clothing, want of shelter and the pain of disease. Death is a blow to all alike. So let us not add to the suffering of others, but bring amity to those who are in enmity; unity to those who are divided; peace and harmony to the confused and restless.

May all beings be well and happy! May no harm come to them! May their upward path be smooth, sure and steady!



## Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Zen

Two important aspects of Buddhism popular today are Mahāyāna and Zen Buddhism. Yet in the beginning there were no such teachings as Theravāda and Mahāyāna. What the Buddha taught was known as the Doctrine and Discipline (*Dhamma-Vinaya*). Three months after the Buddha's passing away, a Council was convened by his immediate disciples to recite the Dhamma and the Vinaya. The Ven. Ānanda, who had been the Buddha's attendant for twenty-five years, recited the Dhamma; Ven. Upali recited the Vinaya, the precepts.

At this Council sections of the Dhamma were assigned to the Elders (*Theras*) and their pupils to commit to memory. Thus the Dhamma was passed on from teacher to pupils orally. No additions or omissions were made at this Council.

One hundred years after the passing away of the Buddha, the Second Council was held and only some matters pertaining to the Vinaya were discussed, not the Dhamma. At this Second Council some "radical" monks were in favour of changing some minor Vinaya precepts. However, the orthodox monks differed and disagreed and said nothing could be changed. In consequence a group of monks left the Council and formed the *Mahāsaṅghika*—the Great Community.

In the 3rd century B.C. after the Buddha's passing away, during Emperor Asoka's regime, the Third Council was held to discuss and recite both the Dhamma and the Vinaya. The Teachings approved and accepted by the monks of this Council became known as Theravāda—the Teachings of the Elders. After this Third Council, Emperor Asoka's son, the Arahāt Maha Mahinda who came to Sri Lanka, brought with him the *Tipiṭaka* or the Buddhist Canon, the texts with the commentaries that were recited at the Third Council. The texts were written in Māgadhi (Pāli), the language spoken by the Buddha. Even during this time there was no mention of Mahāyāna.

The first mention of the terms Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna is found in the Sutra of the Lotus of the Sublime Law (*Saddharmapundarika Sutra*) (1st century B.C.—1st century A.C.). But these yānas are not found anywhere in the Pali Canon, the *Tipiṭaka*, or in the Pali literature. Not even the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvāṃsa*, the Pali chronicles of Sri Lanka, mention them.

The term Mahāyāna was clearly defined and designated about the 2nd century A.C. and Nāgarjuna, the great exponent of Mahāyāna, developed the Mahāyāna philosophy emphasizing the importance of *sūnyatā*—everything is void. (See his *Mādhyamikakārikā*.) Later came Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dharmakīrti, Āryadeva, Dinnāga, etc., stalwart supporters of Mahāyāna who enriched the Mahāyāna literature. So it was about 700 years after the passing away of the Buddha that the two terms Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna were introduced.

The ill-informed refer to Theravāda, now existing in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Campuchia, Laos and Bangladesh, as Hīnayāna. They do not know what they are talking about. When Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka by Ven. Mahinda in the 3rd century B.C., there were no yānas. The Hīnayāna sect developed in India and has nothing to do with Theravāda Buddhism. The Theravāda was not involved in either the schools of Mahāyāna (the Great Vehicle) or Hīnayāna (the Low Vehicle). Theravāda exists independent of any yānas.

In 1950 when the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) was inaugurated in Colombo, Sri Lanka, the members of the WFB from both the East and the West unanimously decided to drop the contemptuously used term “Hīnayāna” when referring to Theravāda Buddhism existing today. So as of now, there is no Hīnayāna sect in existence anywhere in the world. It has fallen into oblivion.

Mahāyāna and Theravāda are the two great Buddhist schools in existence in the world today. Mahāyāna spread to the Far East—to China, Japan, Korea, Tibet and Mongolia. Theravāda spread throughout Southeast Asia—Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Campuchia, Laos, Bangladesh and in some parts of Malaysia, India and Indonesia. Today both Mahāyāna and Theravāda have penetrated to the remotest corners of the globe. Several Western countries with a Buddhist Sangha are now qualifying to be included in the list.



The principal teachings of both Mahāyāna and Theravāda are almost the same. Both schools follow Sakyamuni Gotama the Buddha, as their religious teacher. The Four Noble Truths, the essence of Buddhism, dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), the three signata or characteristics (*anicca, dukkha, anattā*), the Noble Eightfold Path, which is Buddhism in practice, life before birth and life after death, and Nibbāna, the goal of Buddhists, are the same without any dispute.

Some think that the Bodhisattva ideal is exclusively Mahāyāna, and Theravāda speaks only of Arahatsip, personal attainment, which is selfish. However, a careful and dispassionate student of Buddhism will see the Bodhisattva ideal in Theravāda literature.

The Bodhisattva ideal of becoming Buddhas to save others in *samsāra*, or repeated existence, is not denied in the Theravāda system of thought. However, there are no hard and fast rules that all must become Buddhas. One has the right to choose his way of deliverance according to one's own inclinations and longings. If one wants to become a Buddha, one will have to cultivate the *pāramitā* (*pāramī*), or perfections, virtues that lead to Buddhahood. (See above p. 54 n. 13.) Those who are satisfied with the *Arahat* ideal can do so, also by practising the *pāramitās*. There is no compulsion. As the Mahāyāna tradition advocates that all followers of Mahāyāna prepare for Buddhahood to save beings, the problem is who is going to save whom, for all are Buddhas.\*

## Zen Buddhism

Both Mahāyāna and Theravāda Buddhism had their origin in India, the cradle of Eastern thought and philosophy. Indirectly, Zen Buddhism, too, came from India. Bodhidharma, a Buddhist monk from India, went to China in the sixth century A.C. He was the third son of a Brahmin king in South India. He was a man of much erudition and insight in whom there was a great urge to spread the teachings of the Buddha in far away lands. So he doffed the lay clothes and donned the robe of a Buddhist monk. He had practised meditation and had

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\* Those interested in the subject may read the very informative essay on "*Theravada-Mahayana and the Bodhisattva Ideal in Buddhism*," by Dr. Walpola Rahula Thera, Buddhist Missionary Society, Kuala Lumpur.

gained mind culture and tranquillity of mind. Bodhidharma left his motherland and went to China, crossing over land and sea. He left many writings and sayings for posterity.

### Origin of the Word Zen

There is an important word in Buddhism pertaining to meditation (*bhāvanā*). The word is *jhāna* in Pali, *dhyāna* in Sanskrit. The final syllable was dropped and *ghan* was transliterated into Chinese as *chan*. Even today the Chinese use the word *chan* for *samādhi* meditation. The first person to bring *chan* from China to Japan was Dosho. When *chan* meditation was introduced to Japan in the twelfth century, the word *chan* became the Japanism, *zen*.

*Jhāna* means meditative absorption or deep concentration leading to insight (*vipassanā*). It is the concentrated or collected mind that sees things as they really are, in their proper perspective.

So it goes without saying that Zen is meditation—seeing directly into one's nature, attaining enlightenment (*satori* in Japanese, *wu* in Chinese). The practice of Zen begins with the aspiration to realize the way of enlightenment. In Japan Zen is vibrantly alive and very much a part of the daily life of the Japanese. Zen Buddhism has become popular and welcomed by Westerners, too. Buddhist meditation is a practice for our times when people find themselves bewildered by intense feelings of insecurity in our modern materialistic society.

Although Zen is not a system founded upon logic and analysis, there may be an intellectual element in Zen. Zen approves direct experience of reality. It is not mere negation or mere nothingness leading to a so-called "blank" mind.

Once Wu, the first Emperor of the Liang dynasty (reigned 502-549 A.C.), asked Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch of the Zen sect in China, as to the ultimate and holiest principle of Buddhism. The sage is reported to have answered: "Vast emptiness and nothing holy in it." Emptiness (*sūnyatā*) is a deep doctrine of the Buddha, and Nāgarjuna's teaching of *sūnyatā*, void or emptiness, is based on the Theravāda teachings. Hear these words of the Buddha (Sn. 1119 Mogharāja Sutta, see above p. 155):



Ever mindful, Mogharāja,  
See the world as void (*suñña*).

Zen may appear occasionally too enigmatic, cryptic and full of contradictions but it is after all a simple discipline and teaching. Zen aims at full enlightenment for oneself and to help others to attain it. Zen may have “prayers” but they are aspirations (*patthanā* or *prārthanā*):

1. However numberless all beings be, I pray that they be saved.
2. However inexhaustible the passions be, I pray that they all be eradicated.
3. However immeasurable differentiated the Dharma is, I pray that it may all be studied.
4. However supremely exalted the Buddha-Way may be, I pray it may all be attained.

#### Some Japanese Zen Terms:

- i. Sitting cross-legged is a form of sustained “concentration” called in Japanese *zazen*. In Chinese *tso-chan* means, literally, “sitting *dhya*na” or “Zen sitting.”
- ii. Enlightenment (*satori*, *wu* in Chinese) is not a trance in which reality disappears, nor an abnormal state of mind.
- iii. *Koan* is a kind of problem which is given by the Zen master to his disciples to solve.
- iv. *Kyosaku* is beating with the stick to deepen the Zen experience.
- v. *Zendo*, Zen Hall.

The cardinal virtues or *pāramitā* (*pāramī*) of the Bodhisatva or Zen follower: *Dāna*, *sīla*, *kshānti*, *virīya*, *dhya*na, *prajñā*—Charitable giving, virtue of observing the precepts, forbearance or patience, energy, meditative absorption, wisdom. In Theravāda there are ten *pāramitās* or perfections. (See above p.54 n.13.)

Those interested in Zen Buddhism may read: *The Essentials of Zen Buddhism—An Anthology of the Writings of Daisetz T. Suzuki*, ed. by Bernard Phillips; *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* by D.T. Suzuki, Erich Fromm and Richard De Martino; *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*, compiled by Paul Reps (a Pelican Book).

## A Bee's Wishful Optimism<sup>1</sup>

*"Night will pass, the fair dawn will come,  
The sun will rise, the lotuses will laugh."  
Thus mused the bee caught in the calyx of a lotus.  
O doom! doom! An elephant tore up the lotus plant!*

It was evening, the sun was setting slowly in the west. The birds were hastening to their nests while night beasts were beginning to prowl for prey. Now a bee—a busy little bee—was buzzing this way and that, seeking a last little bit of honey to still its hunger. Then it saw a pond full of glowing lotuses, and with great joy the bee rested on the calyx of a tender little lotus to feast on a trifle of its hidden nectar. The bee did not harm the beauty of the lotus, it only drank some honey. But alas, with the setting of the sun, the lotus closed its silky petals, thus trapping its hungry visitor. Yet the little bee was not without hope. These were the thoughts that flashed through its heart as the poor creature lay snared in the dainty lotus-prison.

"The night will pass away, yielding place to the fair dawn; the sun will rise, and this lotus will expand, and soon shall I quit this prison house to join my companions."

But lo! The unexpected happens. The lordly elephant, the king of the forest, wends his way along the the path that leads to the pond. He drinks his fill and splashes the cool water over his massive flanks. The questing sensitive trunk scents the luscious lotus—the very same lotus in which our errant bee lay captive!

In an instant the mighty beast tears up the lotus plant and crunch—leaves, flower and bee disappear into that vast maw! And the little bee, quite contrary to its wishful optimism, thus went to its death.



Such is life! One moment here, then lost forever. Who can say with certainty that one will live to see the morrow? All is fleeting: the flower's beauty and the bird's melody and the bee's hum.

All meetings end in partings, while all life ends in death. And we, in this mysterious universe, live, love and laugh, for "it is easy enough to be pleasant when life flows along like a song." Yet "when sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions" (Shakespeare in *Hamlet*), and then the whole world appears to be one picture of pain.

Still, the man who views life with a detached outlook will see things in their proper perspective. He whose cultural training urges him to be calm and unperturbed under all life's vicissitudes, who can smile when everything goes dead wrong—he, indeed, is a man worthwhile.

Refraining from intoxicants and become heedful, having established themselves in patience and purity, the wise train their minds. And it is only through such training that a quiet mind is achieved.

A certain understanding of the working of kamma (actions) and how kamma comes into fruition (*kamma vipāka*) is very necessary for one who is genuinely bent on cultivating equanimity. In the light of kamma one will be able to have a detached attitude towards all beings, even to inanimate things. The proximate cause of equanimity is the understanding that all beings are the result of their actions, kamma. This world in which we have taken our temporary abode is like a large lotus out of which we all—men and women—gather honey with strenuous struggle. We build up wishful hopes, and we plan for the morrow. But one day, sudden perhaps, and unexpected, there comes the inevitable hour when Death, the elephant, Maccu Māra, tears up our lives and brings our hopes to naught.

"The face of life is but a mask that hides death. Listen to the poet:

*'Learn it, learn it well, the world is a dream and its floating  
forms are but dust of dreams;  
This body that we feed with perfume is more ephemeral  
than a flower's flaming end;*

*All our possessions are shackles that bind us more strongly  
than poverty;  
Money, fortune, youth and lustiness are drawn as caravans  
into their desert death."*

History has proved again and again, and will continue to prove that nothing in this world is lasting. Nations and civilizations rise, flourish and die away as waves upon the ocean yielding place to new, and thus the scrolls of time record the passing pageant, the baseless vision and the fading flow that is human history.

Therefore said the sages of yore:

"The eight great mountains and the seven seas,  
The sun, the gods who sit and rule over these,  
You, I, the universe, must pass away.  
Time conquers all. Why dote on Māyā's play?"

#### Notes:

1. This story is based on a translation of the eighth and last verse of the *Bramarāṣṭaka* written in Sanskrit by the Indian poet Saṁkarācārya, believed to be a contemporary of Kālidāsa, the most re-nowned poet of India.



## Abbreviations

**A. Books:** All references to Pali texts and commentaries are to editions of the PTS.

A.	Anguttara-nikāya (number of the volume and page marked)
AA.	Anguttara-nikāya Aṭṭhakathā (commentary)
D.	Dīgha-nikāya
Dhp.	Dhammapada (number of the verse marked)
DhpA.	Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā (commentary)
Iti.	Itivuttaka
M.	Majjhima-nikāya
Miln.	Milindapañha
Pd.	Paramatthadīpanī, Commentary to the Therīgāthā
Ps.	Psalms of the Sisters
S.	Saṃyutta-nikāya
Sn.	Sutta-nipāta
Thag.	Theragāthā
Ud.	Udāna
Vin.	Vinaya Piṭaka (text)
Vism.	Visuddhimagga

### B. Terms

A.C.	After Christ
Com.	Commentary
Nikāya	A collection of suttas or discourses in Pali
n.	Footnote
BPS	Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka
PTS	Pali Text Society of London
Sutta	A sermon or discourse of the Buddha or his disciples recorded in the Canonical Texts
Thera	The word Thera is a title meaning Elder, given to a monk who has attained ten years standing in the Order (one who has observed ten <i>vassa</i> or rainy seasons). Mahāthera, a great Elder, one with more than twenty years' standing (See p. 361).

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# **A PATH TO ULTIMATE HAPPINESS**

**True Sincerity**  
*towards others*

**Purity of Mind**  
*inside*

**Equality**  
*in everything we see*

**Proper Understanding**  
*of ourselves and our environment*

**Compassion**  
*helping others in a wise and unconditional way*

**See Through**  
*to the truth of impermanence*

**Let Go**  
*of all wandering thoughts and attachments*

**Freedom**  
*of mind and spirit*

**Accord With Conditions**  
*go along with the environment*

**Be Mindful of Amitabha Buddha**  
*wishing to reach the Pure Land and follow in His Teachings*

**FROM THE TEACHINGS OF  
VENERABLE MASTER CHIN KONG**













शारदा पुस्तकालय

(संजीवना शा. द. केन्द्र)

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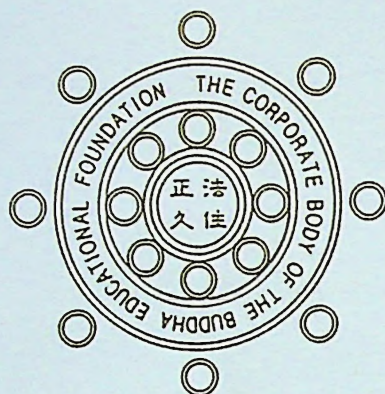
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*The Ven. Piyadassi Thera addressing an Audience in New York during Vesak Celebrations, held at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, New York.*

Nayaka Thera Piyadassi is a Buddhist monk, a native of Sri Lanka, a land that has fostered Buddhism for close to 2,300 years. He was educated at Nālandā College, one of the important centres of Buddhist education in Sri Lanka, and thereafter at the University of Sri Lanka. At the age of twenty he entered the Buddhist Order and mastered the religion and philosophy of Buddhism under the tutorship of the Venerable Vaji-rañāṇa, Sangha Nāyaka, founding-superior of the Vajirārāma, Colombo, a most well-known authority on Buddhism. He also attended the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University, U.S.A., as a Research Student. Today, Ven. Piyadassi is one of the world's most eminent Buddhist monks, a forceful preacher of great renown, an indefatigable *Dhamma-dūta*. In his long years of service to the Dhamma he has represented Sri Lanka at several international religious and cultural conferences.

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